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STO

FRIENDS
OF ACPL

The young foxes always sat around the prisoner in a fat row.

From "The Travels of Honk-a-Tonk"

WILD FOLK

Stories of Field and Forest

by

ALLEN CHAFFEE

Illustrated by

CHARLES LIVINGSTON BULL

and PETER DARU

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THE ADVENTURES OF FLEET FOOT AND HER FAWNS

THE TRAVELS OF HONK-A-TONK

SNOOKS—THE BEAR CUB

THE ADVENTURES OF FLEET FOOT AND HER FAWNS

CO. SCHOOLS
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CHAPTER I.

THE SPOTTED FAWNS.

"Me-o-ow!" screamed Old Man Lynx, from the heart of the woods. The two spotted fawns heard the cry from their laurel copse on the rim of Lone Lake. But, though their big, soft eyes were round with terror, so perfectly had they been trained, they never so much as twitched an ear. Well did they know that the slightest movement might show to some prowler of the night just where they lay hidden.

Next morning, no sooner had the birds begun to chirp themselves awake, than Mother Fleet Foot fed the fawns as usual and ate her own light breakfast of lily pads.

Then she lined up the two fawns before her.

"Children," she said, in deer language, "you have a great deal to learn before ever you can take care of yourselves in these woods. From now on we are going to have lessons."

"Yes, Mother," bleated the little ones, "but what are lessons."

"They are going to be as much like play as we can make them," said Fleet Foot. "You need practice in running, and we must play *'Follow the Leader'* every day. Mother, of course, will be the leader. It will be lots of fun."

The fawns waggled their ears in delight.

"Now listen, both of you," said Fleet Foot. "*This* means danger! Follow me!" And she stamped her foot three times and whistled, as she leaped away through the bushes.

"Just watch my white flag, and you'll know where to follow," she called; and she showed them how, when she ran, she held the white lining of her tail straight up to show which way she had gone. This was be-

cause her brown back might not show between the tree-trunks.

"And when I give the danger signal, *you* must give it, too, to warn the others," she added, leaping back to their side.

"What others?" asked the tinier fawn.

"Any deer within ear-shot. That is how we help each other. And remember—obey on the instant! It is the only safe way!"

Suddenly she gave the danger signal!

This time it was in real alarm, for she had spied a black snake wiggling toward them. The fawns bounded after her, just in time to escape the ugly fellow. And, because woods babies learn quickly they remembered to give their own tiny stamp and whistle, their own wee white flags wig-wagging behind them. Fleet Foot could have killed the snake with her sharp fore hoof, but a deer's long legs are better suited to running away when danger is near.

The next day she taught them to leap exactly in her foot-prints. She took short steps, so that it would be easy for them. Great skill and experience is needed for a

deer to know where and how to put his feet down when he makes those great leaps of his. He may land, now among the rocks, now in marshy ground, slipping over mosses and scrambling over tree-trunks. It would be only too easy to break one of those slender legs, and be at the mercy of his enemies.

By the time the fawns were six weeks old, they had learned just how to land without stumbling and hurting their frail ankles. Then, one day, young Frisky Fox, hiding at the edge of the clearing, saw a strange sight. In fact, he thought he had never seen anything quite so odd in all his life.

Down four little trails from the hill-top came four does, Fleet Foot among the number. And close behind each doe came her two fawns. Then a fifth mother came from the other side of the meadow. She had only one baby with her.

It was to be a sort of party. But the fawns were most unwilling to get acquainted, as their mothers intended them to do. The baby bucks made at each other with heads lowered, ready to fight. The infant does

backed timidly away to the edge of the meadow. But their mothers insisted, with gentle shakings of their heads and shovings of their velvet noses.

They were pretty creatures, these baby deer, with their soft orange-brown coats spotted with white, and their great innocent brown eyes! Everything about them, from their slender legs to their swinging stride, was graceful.

Now the mothers formed in line, the little ones trailing along behind them. "Ah!" thought Frisky Fox, "a game of '*Follow the Leader*'." He and his brothers had often played it with Father and Mother Red Fox.

At first the does ran slowly around the clearing, then they quickened their pace, the little ones trying their best to keep up.

Suddenly Fleet Foot, who was in the lead, leaped over a fallen log at the edge of the glade and off into the wood-land. The other does followed. Then came Fleet Foot's youngest. This little scamp only ran around the log, while her brother crawled under.

But that was not what Fleet Foot wanted.

She came back, stamping her foot for attention.

"Do just as I do!" she insisted. "Now come back and try it over again." And she trotted out into the glade, and circled around it, the tinier fawn close at her heels, till she came to the log again.

"Now!" she stamped, taking the leap once more. The fawn followed till she came to the log, then stopped short, with her nose against it. Fleet Foot hurdled back, and coming up behind, butted the youngster with her head till the fawn tried to jump. This time the little creature went over as light as a bit of thistle-down—probably much to her own surprise.

Then Fleet Foot turned to the larger fawn. "Come, now, there's nothing like trying," she urged. But he only gave a ba-a-ah! and wriggled under the tree-trunk again.

"Follow me," his mother bade him. First she led him several times around the glade. "Now!" she stamped, leaping the log once more. This time he followed without stopping to think about it.

The other fawns behaved much the same way, but at last their mothers had them all in line. Then what a race they had! First around and around the opening, faster and faster and faster. Then, without warning, across the log and back again, till every infant buck and doe of them could do it perfectly.

"Um!" sniffed Frisky Fox. "Wouldn't one of those little fellows make good eating? I'd certainly like to try it!" For the smell of venison that blew to his nostrils on the breeze fairly made his mouth water.

But Frisky was too wise a pup to think for an instant he could catch one. And so he finally trotted off to stay his appetite with field mice. But he told Father Red Fox about it that night in the den on the hillside, and the older fox made up his mind that next day *he* would be the one to watch when the fawns came to the meadow. If he couldn't catch one, at least he liked to know all that went on in the woods. One never knew when an odd bit of knowledge might come in handy to a fellow that lives by his wits.

That day the fawns were being drilled to run around and around in circles. They made a track like a figure 8, only with three loops instead of two. Sometimes one of the little fellows would slip and stumble.

"I have it" Father Red Fox told himself. "The fawns are learning to make a quick turn. Because they'd break their legs if they were to stumble that way in the underbrush."

The old fox knew that he could never catch one by the usual methods. He did wonder, though, if he might not corner one by trickery. So, gliding from tree-trunk to tree-trunk, he crept nearer the unsuspecting little school, keeping always on the side where the wind could tell no tales!

CHAPTER II.

A FOXY TRICK.

Now it was chiefly in a spirit of mischief that Father Red Fox decided to chase the fawns. To tell the truth, the old fellow was proud of his wits; and though he knew he could not hope to catch them and bring them down by a straightaway race, he thought he might use some trickery on them.

So, he watched and waited till he should find them alone. After an hour or more in the racing meadow, Fleet Foot called to her little ones with a "He-eu" and a stamp of her little fore hoof, and led them back to Lone Lake, where they all waded out after their supper of lily pads. Every minute of the time Father Red Fox was right behind, but always with the wind in his face, so that

she wouldn't catch his musky scent on the breeze with that wonderful nose of hers.

Now Father Red Fox knew one thing about Fleet Foot, the doe. He knew that when she heard a sound that alarmed her, she always ran straight away from the sound, without once stopping to see what made it. No sooner, therefore, was she neck-deep in Lone Lake, with her back to the shore, than he cracked a twig behind her.

The doe, hearing that, supposed of course it must be Old Man Lynx, at least, or perhaps a big black bear, as nothing so small and dainty as a fox ever made a sound like that.

She was terribly frightened, and whistling the fawns to follow, she swam straight across the Lake, never once stopping for breath till they scrambled up the opposite bank.

But Father Red Fox had raced around the upper end of the Lake, just far enough back in the woods so that she couldn't see him. And the instant the tired little family

planted their hoofs on dry ground, Red Fox, hiding behind a boulder, cracked an even larger twig, and made them think there was another bear on that side of the Lake.

So she had to lead them back across the Lake again, to the third line of shore. But Father Red Fox was there before her and cracked another twig to make her think there was a bear on that side, too.

This time the fawns were fairly gasping for breath, their little spotted sides heaving painfully and their big eyes round with fright. But there was no help for it; Fleet Foot had to make them swim back across the Lake to the fourth bank, where she hoped to get into the woods before the three bears could catch her. She was quite worn out, herself, by now, and it was only the fear of death that kept her in the race at all. But finally up the bank she stumbled, and on down a forest trail, her fawns following desperately.

Father Red Fox laughed as he ran around the Lake. They were all so worn out that it should be an easy matter to cor-

ner them. In fact, that wicked fellow had one of the meanest plans in his black heart that ever deserved the name of a foxy trick. And so far it had worked.

Fleet Foot, believing she had nothing less than a bear on her trail, raced on and on till her flanks dripped foam and her legs felt weak and wobbly—which was just what the old fox intended. On he raced after her, knowing she wouldn't stop even to turn her head.

Then, suddenly, he made a short cut in the trail and headed her straight toward a brush heap. The tired doe drew her trembling legs together for the leap that would carry her over in safety. But there was not quite enough spring left in those delicate hind quarters. She came down too soon, catching one of her slim feet in the brush. It broke her leg.

Ah, but Red Fox had hoped it would be one of the fawns. Fleet Foot he dared not approach, because she could strike him with her sharp fore hoofs, and punish him severely. In fact, had she known it was only

a fox behind her, she would have stopped to face him long ago.

The fawns—little rascals that they were—had not tried to leap the brush heap; they had left the trail and gone around it, hiding—when their mother fell—by crawling under a juniper bush. And there they waited, without so much as waggling an ear, till Red Fox had given up his quest in disgust and trotted away home.

But their troubles were not ended. For one thing, they were hungry. Besides, what was Fleet Foot to do, helpless there where a real bear might find her?

Just then they heard a cow-bell.

Clover Blossom, the soft-eyed Jersey at the Valley Farm, must have found a broken place in the pasture fence, and wandered into the woods again. She loved to go exploring.

This time she gave the Boy a chase. Here it was, nearly dark! Straining his ears to catch the sound, he decided he must creep very softly upon her, or she would never let him catch her.

The Boy, however, was not the only one to hear the tinkle of the cowbell. Though Clover Blossom grazed quite unaware that she was being watched, as an actual fact she had quite an audience of wood folk around her, peering and sniffing and studying the situation. Softly, silently, creeping through the hazel copse, came Frisky, the fox pup, as curious as his nose was long. Then came Bobby, Madame Lynx's kitten, to whose nostrils the odor was most tempting, though he did not dare attack an animal so large. Crouched flat along a low-hanging branch, he peered and peered with his narrow gold-green eyes, his claws working nervously into the bark.

Came also Unk Wunk, the Porcupine, rattling his slow way up a beech tree from whose top he could see all that was going on. He, too, watched curiously as the Jersey wandered from one huckleberry bush to another, lowing faintly now and then as she realized that she needed to be milked.

But the two who were most interested as she came their way were the hungry fawns.

They had waited hours for the familiar stamp of their mother's foot that should call them to her, and for the warm milk that had never failed them when they needed it, and their little stomachs ached worse and worse.

The hot sun had crept across the sky, and the birds who had chirped and warbled over their breakfast had come out again for the cool of the late afternoon to chatter over their worms. Then the sun had grown large and red in the west, and the crickets had begun to chirp, and the white-footed deer mice to scuttle through the leaves in search of beetles. Finally the shadows had grown long and black, and the woods full of a breathing silence, and still they waited for their mother to come and feed them.

Then, at last, they crept to where Clover Blossom mooed her invitation for some one to relieve her udders of their creamy burden. And when the Boy finally peered through the bushes beyond which she stood, he stopped amazed. For there on either side of her a tiny fawn stood nursing!

"Something must have happened to their mother," he told himself. "I wonder if I could coax them to go home with Clover Blossom?"

Then he heard a rustle behind him. Bobby Lynx was slinking home. (He was ever a coward where human beings were concerned.) The next instant the boy spied Fleet Foot, lying helpless in the brush heap.

In her exhaustion after the chase, the pain of her broken leg, and her terror, as she listened, hour after hour, for the coming of stealthy padded feet, she had been too weak to struggle. Then had come a kindly stupor.

The Boy set about applying such first aid as he had at his command. First knotting her fore feet together with his handkerchief so that she could not struggle, he searched until he found a cedar sapling very nearly the size of the leg that was broken. With his jack-knife he made two length-wise slits and removed the bark in two pieces, as nearly the same size as he could make them. They were just long enough to reach below the foot of the deer and above the knee.

These he lined comfortably with dry moss and crumpled grass, for he was going to be as tender of the doe as he would be of a person. Next he tore his shirt, which was an old one, into bandages the width of his wrist, knotting their ends together. For splints he went down to Lone Lake and gathered a bundle of good strong rushes.

But when he tried to set the bone, Fleet Foot struggled so that he had to run home for his father.

The Valley Farmer was a man who could not see any creature suffer, so he came straight back with his son. Lifting her to the ground, the farmer braced himself and held the injured leg while the Boy gently but firmly grasped it with one hand above the fracture and one below. My! How it must have hurt! But his practised fingers pulled the two pieces of bone in opposite directions till he got them end to end! Fleet Foot tried hard to struggle free, for of course she did not understand. But she was helpless. Then the Boy worked the bones, ever so gently, till a slight thud announced

to his listening ear that they had fitted together right. Next, he applied the padded halves of the cedar bark, which—as he had intended—did not reach quite around the leg. For, in this way, he could tie them more firmly, as he bandaged them immovably in place with the strips of his torn shirt.

"There!" the Farmer sighed at last. "That ought to heal. I don't see why a few weeks of rest and good feeding ought not to set her on her feet again. But we'll have to make a litter to take her home."

CHAPTER III.

AT THE VALLEY FARM.

Now that her broken leg had been set so skillfully, Fleet Foot felt better. And the fawns were content to get their supper of the Jersey cow.

But the Boy and his father had to face the problem of getting them all back to the Valley Farm.

"How can we make a litter?" asked the Boy, who was not so skilled in wood-craft as the Farmer.

"First, find two good long poles," his father directed. "I wish we'd brought an axe, but perhaps you can manage with your jack-knife." And under his direction the Boy found what he needed. Next they peeled the bark from a chestnut tree, and on

this they arranged a mattress of dried moss, then tied it firmly between the two long poles. Stretching this flat on the ground, they laid Fleet Foot on it and carried her home in state, one of them shouldering either end of the litter.

"She ought to ride easy on that," said the backwoodsman. But the doe shrank back in fear when the Boy tried laying his hand caressingly on her velvet throat. For every moment she expected they would kill her.

The fawns followed Clover Blossom, and finally they came out into the star-lit meadow, where Fleet Foot caught the odor of cows and sheep from the big red barn. The next thing she knew, she was lying on a mound of sweet-smelling dried clover, in a clean stall of that same barn, and there was a pail of water beside her. She roused herself to drink feverishly, standing on three legs, but she could not eat. Then followed a few hours when she slept despite her fears, because she was too tired to keep awake.

In the pink dawn she awoke at the sound of the milk-pails, and her first thought was

of the fawns. The Boy brought her a hatful of grass; but her great eyes only searched wistfully through the woodland and meadow before the open door, and on to the dew-wet forest where she thought they waited, and she struggled weakly to get to her feet and go to them.

"She's worrying about her babies," said the Boy. "Can't we show them to her?" he begged his father.

"The only trouble with that," the farmer replied, "is that, once they get a sight of her, they won't have anything more to do with Clover Blossom, and she's got to take care of them till their own mother is well again. But that leg will heal quickly. The bone was broken in only one place. We've got to keep her quiet, though,—and the fawns are better off where they are."

Thus several weeks went by, till at last Fleet Foot was able to trip daintily into the pasture lot. But still she worried about the fawns. She was comfortable and well fed, and was even becoming used to the Boy, who brought her food and water every morning

and sometimes a few grains of rock salt. Through the bars of the open doorway she could gaze straight into the cool green woods all day. Had it not been for her longing for the fawns, she would have been quite content to lie still and get well.

The bone had set quickly, for her life in the open had given her pure blood and much reserve strength. But she was anxious to make her escape and search for her babies. Little did she dream, in the confusion of sounds and smells that filled the barn every day, that the pair actually came to Clover Blossom's stall.

Meantime, the fawns throve on the Jersey milk. Though too shy to mingle with the cows and sheep in the pasture lot, they spent their days in a clump of alders down by the brook.

"Won't they be happy when they get their own mother back?" the Boy exclaimed to his father one evening.

The Father looked at his son in a puzzled way.

"The doe has disappeared," he an-

nounced. "I had just taken the splints off her leg. It was healed as good as new. Thought I'd turn her loose in the pasture to limber up a bit, when—would you believe it?—she leaped clean over that fence, and off into the woods out of sight."

"Honestly?" exclaimed the Boy. "Without so much as a thank you! And what will become of her now?"

"Oh, she'll be all right. But isn't it a shame now we didn't let her have her fawns?"

"Perhaps we can keep them ourselves," ventured the Boy wistfully, for he loved pets. "We could tame them and let them grow up with the cows. They're half tame already."

"I don't believe a wild thing is ever really happy that way," mused the Farmer. "Do you?"

"No, perhaps not," decided the Boy. "And besides, their mother will break her heart if she never finds them again."

"She'll feel badly, of course. But don't you see, the fawns will take to the woods

again, sooner or later, unless we keep them tied all the time. And then do you know what would happen? They wouldn't know how to take care of themselves, without their mother's training."

"Oh," said the Boy. "And some hungry animal might catch them for its dinner!"

"I'm afraid so," agreed the Farmer. "It is always the young animals that have lost their mothers that get caught."

"Say, I've noticed a funny thing," said the Boy, a few days later. "Clover Blossom has been giving more milk lately, and yet the fawns aren't weaned."

"You didn't see what I saw last night," said the Farmer, smiling. And he told the Boy where to watch.

Meantime what had become of Fleet Foot? First she leaped the fence, and took to the trail down which Clover Blossom had wandered—here over the smooth pine needles, there through the crackling oak leaves, and yonder over a fallen log. And as she went, she nibbled course after course of the dainties of the woodland.

How fit she felt, after her long imprisonment! How swift her slender hoofs, how strong her long hind legs that could send her over a hazel copse like steel springs! And how good it was to be alive in a world all sunshine and dancing butterflies and tinkling streams!

But where were her fawns? She searched and searched for some sign of the little fellows. But she searched in vain. And all the joy went out of life again.

Then, one evening, as she stood on a hilltop watching the Boy drive the cows home from pasture, she saw something that made her lonely heart beat high with hope. She couldn't make out the little spotted coats so far away, but she did see their red-brown outlines, so tiny beside the cows, and the furtive way they shied along, as if they never could get used to coming right out in the open. And her anxious mother-heart assured her that they were worth a closer view.

So, the next night, before they turned off the lane to the pasture lot, the fawns heard

the little stamp that had always been their mother's signal. "Wait where you are—and hide!" she bade them with her whistled "Hiew!" "I will come to you."

And they obeyed, thrilling with a great wave of homesick longing for the mother they had thought lost to them. The Boy, tip-toeing back to see what had become of his pets, found the doe in the pasture lot, nursing her fawns.

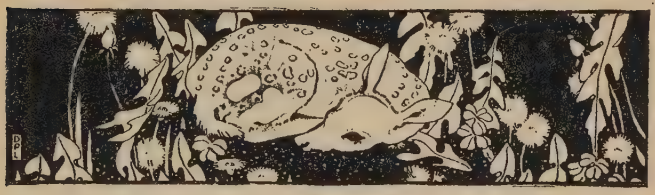
And though he did not know it, she stayed with them until the first gray light in the east warned her that she must leave them for the day. For the fence was too high for the fawns to leap.

The next night the Boy watched again, from the cover of the hay-stack. Before long the doe leaped smoothly into the pasture, stamping for the fawns. Then he saw the flash of her white tail signaling for them to follow, and after that, two tinier tails wig-wagging through the dusk as they disappeared in the alders down by the brook that ran through the lower end of the pasture.

The Boy stared after them awhile, a smile

of sympathy in his eyes. Then—ever so softly, so as not to alarm them—he slipped across to where she had leaped the fence, and lifted the top bars away.

The next morning the fawns were gone!



CHAPTER IV.

THE ROUND-UP.

Once back in the good green woods, both Fleet Foot and the fawns capered joyously.

It was good just to be alive.

Up and down through the forest trails they galloped,—down to Lone Lake, then back to Pollywog Pond and along the familiar trails on the slopes of Mt. Olaf. Summer was even riper and lovelier than when they had been taken to the Valley Farm,—and to the fawns, remember, it was their first taste of mid-summer in the Maine woods.

These tiny fellows leaped and gamboled and cavorted, and raced, and played hide-

and-seek, till you would have thought they would have broken their fragile legs among the boulders and fallen tree-trunks. But their mother knew her training had been thorough, and they would know just how to leap and land with safety.

"Hello, there!—Chick-a-dee-dee, Chick-a-dee-dee," a little gray bird in a black cap kept calling, as he followed from tree to tree.

When at last they had had their dinner of warm milk, and Fleet Foot had cropped her fill of the tender green things that lay like a banquet table everywhere about them, she led them to a little rocky ledge that overlooked Lone Lake, where they could lie under the partial shade of a clump of yellow birch trees and rest, while she chewed her cud. The black fly season was well past, and there was nothing to disturb them save a passing swarm of midges that couldn't begin to bite through their thick fur.

(They little dreamed that Frisky, the Red Fox Pup, was peering down on them from a higher crag, where he, too, crouched on the

red-brown soil that proved such a perfect cam-ou-flage.)

No one save a fox could have seen the fawns, so long as they lay still, their tawny orange-brown coats blended so perfectly with the ground. And if anyone had noticed the white spots on their sides, he would have taken them for a glint of the creamy birch-bark.

At first the two youngsters watched a yellow-jacketed bumble-bee, who bumbled and tumbled among the perfumed spikes of the Solomon's seals. Then their ears pricked to a new voice.

"Greetings, my friends!" called a cheery red-brown coated bird who had been rustling about among the dead leaves just behind them.

He was as large as a robin, with even longer beak and tail, and his creamy breast was streaked with darker brown.

"Hello, Thrush," bleated the fawns in shy friendliness.

"You mustn't look for any nest in the bushes around here, because you won't find

Fleetfoot and her fawns.

it," twittered Thrush, in a tone Old Man Red Fox would have been suspicious of. "Listen! I am going to give you a concert!" And he flew to the birch tree over their heads.

There followed a program of the most varied trills and whistles the fawns had ever heard; and though his voice was not so sweet toned as some of the tinier birds', his throaty trills and liquid, low-pitched chirps and whistles were just as delightful as they could be.

There were bird calls all around them, "Pee-wees" and "Chip-chip-chips" and "Wee-wee-wee-wees" and all sorts of soft little calls and answers.

They none of them minded the fawns in the least, except those who had nests on the ground. They always watched nervously when the frisky fellows capered too near, with their sharp little hoofs, though they knew the fawns wouldn't hurt an ant if they knew it.

Every now and again the singers would cease, when one of the soft patches of white

cloud got in front of the sun; for instantly the air grew chilly, and a breeze started all the tree-tops to waving till the birds had to hang on hard.

Then the Lake would ruffle into tiny wavelets and grow dark green like the woods along the shore-line. For before, the water had lain as still as a silver mirror, reflecting the pale blue of the warm sky.

In weather like this, it was good just to lie still and watch and listen, or drowse off with the sun warm on one's fur and the spicy earth smells in one's nostrils. The green world was so interesting.

When a passing cloud of a darker gray brought the big drops pattering about them for a few minutes, they merely scampered under an over-hanging boulder, where they huddled together on a drift of leaves, and watched it all.

Later, when the bull-frogs began their "Ke-dunk, ke-dunk," down under the banks of Lone Lake, where the ducks were feeding their nestlings, and the sun began to send long red beams slanting through the

tree-trunks, Fleet Foot led them down to a shallow cove for a taste of lily pads, and they waded in and tried a nibble of everything she tasted.

After that came a night under a drooping pine tree, whose lowest branch roofed over a boulder in the most inviting way, and the wind droned through the branches and blew the mosquitoes all away, and they lay snuggled warmly together on the fragrant needles, and watched the stars come out.

In the morning they were just starting out on an exploring tour when they were alarmed by the baying of a hound.

Now Lop Ear had always had an important duty at the Valley Farm. It had been his part to round up the cows when night came, or when any of them went astray in the woods. And all day yesterday he had missed Fleet Foot from her stall in the hay-barn.

True, she had always seemed different from the regular cows. Until she came there with her broken leg, he had always supposed she belonged in the woods. But surely,

surely the Farmer would not have kept her there unless she belonged there, reasoned the faithful dog. And now she was gone!

There was but one thing to do: he must go in search of her and bring her home.

All that day he tried in vain to find her trail. The next morning he was up with the sun. This time he would search farther afield. "Wow! Bow-wow! Wow-wow-wow!" Here was a foot-print, unless his nose deceived him! What's more, they had passed that way not ten minutes since! It was but a matter of following the trail, and he would be nipping at their heels and driving them back to the Farm.

"Wow-wow-wow!" he bayed; and Frisky, the Red Fox Pup, heard and came trotting to peek at him and see what it was all about.

The sound filled the fawns with uneasiness. They had always been afraid of Lop Ear, with his nipping and yapping around the cattle.

"Children," bade Fleet Foot sternly, "hurry to that clump of bracken and lie down. Stretch your heads and fore legs out

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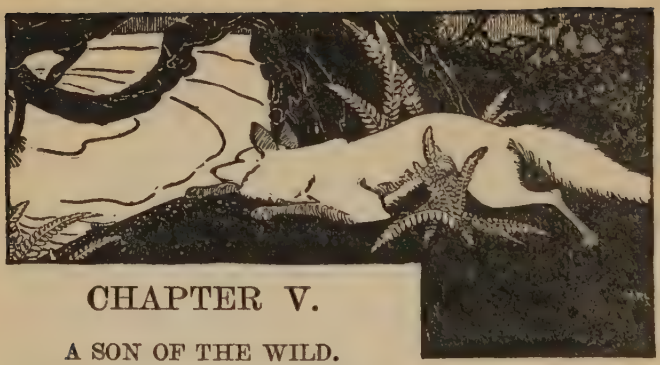
straight in front of you and lie there as flat as you can make yourselves,—while I lead this hound off somewhere where he'll lose your scent."

The fawns obeyed instantly.

Fleet Foot then doubled back on her trail, and with a stamp and a snort to call the hound's attention, she soon had him following her great bounds in quite the opposite direction. She kept just far enough ahead of him to make sure he wouldn't give up the chase—though she could easily have outdistanced him.



CHAPTER V.

A SON OF THE WILD.

Now Frisky, the Red Fox Pup, admired no one so much as he did his father. And he had heard his father tell how he had chased the doe and her fawns that dreadful day when Fleet Foot broke her leg.

Not that the little rascal really wanted to hurt those gentle soft-eyed babies. He wasn't hungry, and besides, he couldn't have killed them had he wanted to. He just thought it would be fun to play that he was Father Red Fox and give them a good scare. (But how were the fawns to know that?) In other words, like a great many very young persons, he didn't stop to think of the other fellow's point of view in the matter.

Thus, no sooner had he seen Fleet Foot headed in the other direction, leaving the fawns unprotected, than he pranced merrily up to them, his yellow eyes gleaming with mischief.

"Yip, yip!" he yelled at them in his high-pitched little voice.

Now the fawns had been told to lie still. But how could they, when danger was almost upon them? They were certainly not going to lie there and let this little wild dog bite them!

With a bleat of alarm they sprang to their feet and raced through the brush, leaping over bush and brier and boulder as if their very lives depended on it.

But Frisky Fox could also leap bush and brier and boulder. And he came leaping after, just two jumps behind them!

Now around a clump of green-briar, down a trail of dainty pointed hoof prints that led through brush head high,—up hill, down hill the trio sped, startling the pheasants and sending them into the air with a whirr.

Here the trail turned abruptly down the

side of a precipice, and the fawns followed, while Frisky, having paused for a moment when his tail got caught in a bramble, had to come trotting after with his nose to the ground, as he could no longer see them.

Now the fawns had never been taught that water carries no scent. They just happened to go splashing across a bit of a frog pond that lay cupped among hillocks of seedling pines. But looking back at every seventh leap or so, they could see that the fox pup followed his nose to the water's edge, and there stopped and sniffed all about uncertainly, before again catching a glimpse of them.

But though the chase went merrily on (that is, merrily on the fox's part), the fawns had learned a valuable lesson.

They now made straight for Lone Lake, and my! You should have seen the ducks take flight as these two alarming little fellows came splashing in among them!

A deer, when pursued by hounds, will always take to water when he can, and the hounds have no scent to follow. Then, unless

there is a hunter along, and he catches sight of his quarry, and fires, the deer are safe.

The Red Fox Pup uses his eyes, as well as his nose, and he was so close behind, and understood so well this trick of taking to water, (for he escaped the hounds that way himself), that he wasn't fooled the least little bit in the world. Not he!

Only once they had taken the plunge, the little fellows decided to swim out to a reedy islet where they could rest. And the fox pup didn't think it worth while to get his fur wet. For when his great brush of a tail gets wet, it is so heavy that it weighs him down, and he can't run nearly so fast, so the mice all get away.

Of course the fawns thought it was all their own cleverness, and you should have heard them telling Fleet Foot about it when she found them there!

The fawns never tired of watching the life that stirred everywhere about them, their great soft eyes filled with pleasant wonder.

One day it would be the one soft cluck of Mother Grouse Hen, calling to her chicks

to hide before Frisky Fox should pass that way.

When he had passed, looking so wise and knowing, (with his bright eyes peering into every nook and corner, and his pointed little nose testing the air for a taint), Mother Grouse Hen would give a different sort of cluck; and back the frightened chicks would come to her, and she would gather them comfortingly under her wings, pressing each wee brown baby to her down-covered breast to reassure him.

Then she would utter a soft, brooding cluck that told them how she loved them, and how safe they were with Mother to look out for them.

CHAPTER VI.

A STRANGE FRIENDSHIP.

What was the matter with the hen-roost at the Valley Farm, the fox pup asked himself?

He had killed so many field mice in the course of the summer that he felt he was really entitled to one of the farmer's nice fat hens,—because the mice might have destroyed the farmer's crops, had Frisky not prevented.

At the same time he knew that Lop Ear, the hound at the Valley Farm, would have another opinion in the matter.

Frisky sat up and thought.

Lop Ear would give the alarm, and then, even if he threw the hound off the scent,

there would be men with guns, and more dodging of bullets than he cared to risk. He had often seen it, watching from his hill-top in the woods. And he always tried to profit by other people's experience.

Suddenly his bright eyes began to snap. The very idea! He would make friends with Lop Ear.

Then Lop Ear might try to be sound asleep on the night when Frisky visited the chicken coop; and should the Hired Man get out his gun, the hound would surely lose his trail.

Thereafter, for days on end, Frisky made the strangest advances to the dignified old hound, whenever the latter fared forth into the woods to catch him a mouse for supper. It was very much like a puppy trying to coax an old dog to play.

"Come chase me!" Frisky would invite, dancing ahead just out of Lop Ear's reach. Then, "I'll chase *you,*" he would vary the program. And Lop Ear (half unwillingly) played the rôle assigned him, till at last he came to look on his evening ramble in the

woods with Frisky as a distinct part of his day's pleasuring.

Not that Frisky ever came within reach of Lop Ear's jaws. No, indeed! That was carrying the thing a bit too far. But he did finally get the hound to the point where he no longer considered it his duty to try to make an end of the young fox. And he really enjoyed their games of hide and seek.

The Boy from the Valley Farm did not know what to make of Lop Ear's growing fondness for solitary rambles.

One night, when the October moon gleamed cool and sparkling through the fringe of fir trees, young Frisky Fox might have been seen loping softly through the corn-field.

"Who goes there?" bayed Lop Ear, as he leaped the barn-yard fence.

"Come and play," coaxed Frisky. "You can't catch me!" and leaping up the sloping roof of the hen-house, he squeezed gracefully through the barred window. A moment more and there was a stifled squawk

and Frisky squeezed his way back through the bars, dragging a hen behind him.

But alas for the best laid plans.

"Bow-wow-wow! You can't do that, you know!" suddenly bayed Lop Ear. "That's carrying the game a little too far. After all, I have my duty to perform."

"What is it?" yelled the Hired Man, poking his head from his sleeping-room in the barn-loft. "A fox, eh?" and he grabbed for his gun, leaning far out to scan the moonlit fields.

Frisky Fox, by keeping the shed between himself and the gun, made off through the corn-field with the hen across his shoulder.

Lop Ear, his warning uttered, now dashed madly in quite the wrong direction,—for the memory of the fox pup's friendship was strong upon him. But the Hired Man was not to be fooled.

In less time than it takes to tell it, he was out circling the field, gun in hand. And the bright moonlight soon showed him where the cornstalks rustled with Frisky's passing.

"Hi, there!" yelled the Hired Man, gun

in hand, as he raced around the corn-field.

But Frisky was an excellent judge of distance, and he knew to a certainty that he was out of gun range.

He therefore deliberately stopped where he was and snatched a bite of his hen.

As the Hired Man came nearer, the fox pup ran farther, always keeping just about so much distance between himself and the gun. He could easily have out-distanced his pursuer. But he was in a mischievous mood to-night, and it pleased him to see how far he could go toward devouring the entire hen while the angry man looked on.

He did it, too, saucily enough, gobbling a bite here and a bite there, looking back over his shoulder the while at the man with the gun. One or two shots did ring out on the crisp night air, kicking up the dirt a few rods behind him, but Frisky Fox ate on, secure by those few rods of space, as well he knew.

Only once did he miscalculate, the shot landing so near him that he knew the next

one would surely get him if the Hired Man tried again.

Quick as a flash the clever rascal toppled over on his side, playing dead. The ruse worked, for the Hired Man did not shoot again. And while he was fumbling his way through the corn-field to where he believed the fox lay waiting, Frisky was making for the woods with his nimble black feet fairly twinkling over the ground.

Throwing himself at last on the soft pine needles on a little hill-top, he peered through the moonlight to where the Hired Man was staring helplessly about him wondering where the dead fox lay. Frisky laughed silently at the success of his ruse,—the first time he had ever played 'possum himself, though he had seen it done once before, when his mother had been hard pressed. In her case she had actually let the boy pick her up, when he found her with one foot in a trap. But to her surprise he had only released her with pitying words and a caress on her silky red head.

No such treatment could be expected of the Hired Man, Frisky knew.

Lop Ear, slinking back to the barnyard with tail between his legs, was just unlucky enough to catch the Hired Man's notice as the latter was returning foxless.

"Here," he ordered threateningly. "Put your nose to that trail and follow it, or I'll show you what's what!"

The next thing Frisky knew, he heard the baying of his one-time friend close on his trail. With a yawn and a lick at his jaws, where a feather still clung, he struck off as easily as if he had just arisen from a sound night's sleep.

He didn't even bother to keep very far ahead of the dog.

CHAPTER VII.

A WIT OUT-WITTED.

Not that Frisky Fox believed greatly in Lop Ear's friendship.

Not after the way the hound had given the alarm at the chicken coop!

But he knew that at any moment he could so far outdistance that doubtful ally that he wasn't in the slightest danger. The ground was firm and dry, and he had all the advantage of his lighter weight and nimbler feet.

Had there been soft snow on the ground it might have been different. But the first frost had not yet ripened the hazel nuts in the woods around Mt. Olaf.

Once, just to punish him, Frisky turned

back and bared his teeth so viciously at Lop Ear that the hound was driven back—to the Hired Man's amazement.

Then Frisky tripped his way down to Rapid River and crossed on the wet brook stones, leaving no scent for Lop Ear to follow.

The hound well off the trail, Frisky again crossed the stream farther up on a fallen log. And circling around through the shadows, he was soon following the Hired Man, slipping behind trees and boulders and smiling from ear to ear as the latter stumbled along with his useless gun.

When at last the hound stopped short at the river bank, where he lost the scent, the Hired Man gave it up in disgust, and went back home to his bed.

And Frisky, the handsome little scoundrel, calmly sought out the dry south side of a hill which would shelter him from the wind and slept with his black legs doubled under him and his white-tipped brush of a tail curled comfortably around him to keep out the draft.

Shrewd, cautious, daring, the Red Fox Pup bade fair at this stage of his career to develop the best set of brains in all the North Woods.

Yet there was one at the Valley Farm that could out-wit him.

Frisky was sitting on his haunches a few days later in the midst of the now deserted hay field, listening for the squeak of a meadow mouse, when something made him prick up his ears.

There was something about that squeak that sounded just a wee bit different from any squeak he had ever heard before.

But no, there it was again, unmistakably the tiny voice of a mouse on the other side of the field. The fox pup had such needle-sharp ears that he could hear fainter sounds than any human being ever could have.

But though Frisky Fox was clever, the Boy at the Valley Farm was more so. And the Boy sat behind a bush at the farther end of the field, as motionless as the gray

stump that Frisky thought he was. This time the joke was on the Red Fox Pup, for the squeaks he heard issued from the Boy's pursed lips. It was an excellent imitation.

He tip-toed nearer and nearer the tiny squeaks, while the Boy gazed at the graceful fellow through his new field glasses.

He was a handsome fellow, was Frisky Fox, with his yellow-red coat shining sleek in the sunlight. And my! How his great plume of a tail fluffed out behind him! His tail was nearly as long as the rest of his body put together, and it fluffed out nearly as broadly. Mother Red Fox certainly had a son to be proud of!

Of a sudden a little breeze shifted around to where it brought the foxy one a faint scent. It told his keen black nose there was something down there besides the bush.

It wasn't a mouse, either!

"No, sir, that's no field mouse," said Frisky's nose, as the Red Fox Pup circled to windward of the tiny squeaking sounds.

"That's the Boy at the Valley Farm!

That's what that is! Now I'll just pretend not to see him at all till I get behind that rock, then I'll race for the woods."

For Frisky didn't know that the thing the Boy was pointing at him was only a pair of field glasses. And it wouldn't have made much difference even had he known. Frisky did not like to be watched. He therefore did exactly as he had planned, crossing the field with seeming lack of interest in anything save the purple and yellow of asters and golden-rod and the scarlet of wood-bine, and the blue of the Indian summer sky, till he felt himself out of range.

At the instant of his discovery that it was one of those dangerous human creatures that sat there like a stump he had cocked his ears sharply and leaped fully two feet into the air in his surprise.

That was the only sign he made, however, of the extreme anxiety that set his heart to thumping, till he was just on the edge of the woods; then he suddenly looked back with one of his thin, husky barks, to know why the Boy should have tried to fool him.

But afterwards, from the shelter of the barberry vines that fringed the old stone wall, he peered and peeked and wondered about it all as long as the Boy remained.

CHAPTER VIII.

STEEP TRAILS.

These hot days in August, when the trout took to the very deepest, coldest pools they could find, and hid themselves all day under the over-hanging rocks, and every creature that couldn't take to the water longed for rain, Fleet Foot used to lead her little family up the steep trails to the top of Mount Olaf or some near-by mountain-top, where the wind blew cool night and day.

These trips were full of much joy for the fawns, for there was all the spice of adventure in following a winding hoof-path that led—they knew not where. For one never knew what might be just around the next turn.

How their hearts thumped when they came suddenly to the edge of a precipice, where they could look down at Beaver Brook tumbling over the rocks away, 'way down below! Or perhaps they could get just a glimpse of Lone Lake lying gleaming in the hollow of the hills.

Not that there was any trail in the real sense of the word.

Left to themselves, they could not have told one rock from another, save here and there where a bit of mica gleamed silver against the gray, or a scraggly pine leaned too far out over a ledge to look safe.

But to their mother their trail was as plain as the nose on your face. It was just a matter of turning and twisting, here to pass between those two queer-shaped boulders, and there to go around that flat rock which teetered alarmingly beneath one's feet. She had been over it all so many times that she had learned the look of each new turn of the pathway. Had so much as one pinnacle been out of place, she would have known,—and wondered why.

One still, sunshiny morning, after they had drunk their fill at a cool green pool of Beaver Brook, they started up the mountain-side for a day under the shade of the last fringe of evergreens before one came to the bare, rocky ridges, where it got too cold for anything to grow, except in sheltered crevices.

The fawns danced and capered to the music of the bird song that filled the woods, while Fleet Foot cropped all sorts of delicious tid-bits,—now a clump of oyster mushrooms growing shelf-like on a fallen log, and now a bunch of blue-berries, plump and juicy and sun-sweet. Life was one long holiday.

One misty morning, as Fleet Foot was leading them in great bounds through the tall meadow grass, the fawns came to a sudden stand-still, their eyes popping with surprise. For they had just barely escaped stepping on the writhing coils of a great long snake.

Their bleat of fear brought Fleet Foot instantly.

"Pouf! That's only a garter snake," she reassured them, with one glance at the length-wise stripes (yellow and dark gray). "That's nothing to be afraid of. The only kind you want to look out for is the kind with cross-wise stripes. I don't believe there is more than one snake in all the North Woods that is poisonous,—and there are at least a dozen that are perfectly harmless."

"What is the poisonous one?" bleated the trembling fawns.

"The rattler. But you won't see one of those in a year's time,—not in these woods, where it gets so cold in winter. They love it hot and dry, and so of course they live mostly out West, though you do find a few sometimes among the rocks on the warm south side of a mountain."

"Oo! What if we'd meet a rattler?" shivered the fawns.

"Well, he'd warn you before you went too near."

"Warn us?—How?"

"He'd rattle, of course. He has a little set of bones on his tail that he can rattle, and

when you hear that, you need to look out, and get away quickly."

"Are the others really harmless, Mother?"

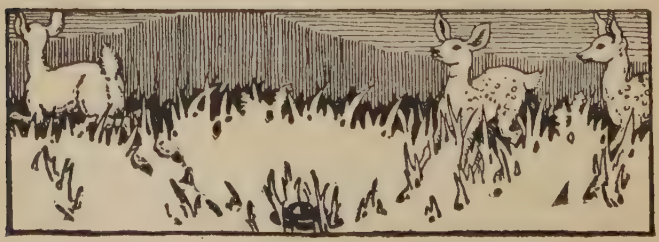
"Harmless to fawns. That is, they have no poison bite. Snakes do a lot of good, eating pests."

"But I don't like snakes," insisted the tinier fawn.

"Well, neither does Mother. But it's so silly, children, to be afraid. Where is that garter snake? Gone, to be sure! And even the rattler only strikes because he thinks you are going to kill him."

The fawns were very thoughtful after that. "Mother," they finally bleated. "Seems as if even the meanest creatures in the woods had *some* use."

"That's right," their mother answered them.



CHAPTER IX.

THE OGRE OF THE AIR.

It was one of those breezy days when white wind clouds piled up against the sky, and patches of shadow traveled across the mountain-sides.

Fleet Foot had decided to take the fawns to Mountain Pond, in the pass between Mount Olaf and Old Bald-face, a peak that had been burned bare of trees by a forest fire, and now grew nothing much save blueberries for the bears to feast on.

Fleet Foot wasn't a bit afraid of bears at this time of year, knowing how greatly they prefer a vegetarian diet, though, at that, she didn't intend to go too near. (After all, the steep gulch of Beaver Brook Bed lay between the two mountain-sides.)

They had a lovely time at the Pond, where they met several other does, with their fawns, and the youngsters played together while their mothers gossiped over their cuds. The cool breeze ruffled their fur delightfully, and they found enough shade in the patch of woods that huddled in the head of the gulch.

As the sun neared the tops of the purple peaks that faded away to the west, the little group started back down the trail to where there was more herbage to browse upon, Fleet Foot lingering along to allow the fawns plenty of time to pick out a sure footing. For it was their first trip over this particular trail.

Carefully they wound over a great overhanging boulder, on the edge of which they paused to peer, with braced hoofs, over the precipice, which here dropped sheer to the rocks below. Just beyond, the first falls of Beaver Brook dashed green-white over the ledges.

Then Fleet Foot hurried on to the foot

of the falls, where one might take a shower bath in the spray.

"Come on, children," she whistled over her shoulder, her eyes on the path ahead. And the tinkle of the falling water filled her ears till she could not have heard their footsteps following, had she tried.

But fawns will be fawns. And the youngsters stopped to watch a queer shadow that now danced across their path. Cloud shadows they had watched all day, but this one was different. In the first place, it was such a tiny thing,—for a cloud. And it danced about in the most amusing manner,—much faster than any cloud shadow they had seen before. In fact, it seemed to be going around and around them in big circles. And it looked exactly as if the little cloud had wings like a bird.

Alas for two such little helpless ones!—Had they but looked above their heads, instead of at the circling shadow, they would have discovered that it *was* a giant bird that made it. In short, it was Baldy the Eagle, the ogre of the air,—and an ogre

that especially delighted in having fawn for supper!

An ugly fellow was Baldy, with his great curved beak and his great yellow claws. His body alone was bigger than that of the fawns, and his wings spread out like the wings of an aeroplane. He was mostly a muddy brown, with white head and fan-spread tail, and he smelled horribly fishy, for he isn't a bit particular about what he eats, and frequently stuffs himself so full of the spoiled fish he finds on the shore that he can't even fly.

The air hissed to his wings.

He waited now till he felt that Fleet Foot was surely too far away to come to their rescue, should he attack the fawns. For he knew from experience that with her sharp hoofs she could put up a fight he would rather not face.

For a while he wandered if he should just simply drop down upon one of the little fellows and pin his talons into his back, and fly away to his nest. But it would be awfully heavy to carry and of course it would kick

and wriggle, till like enough he would be unable to manage his feathered aeroplane, and they would run into some jagged rock.

If the fawns had been orphans, he might have killed one right there, and no one would have interfered.

But they were not orphans, and their mother would come racing back and cut him to pieces with those knife-edged fore hoofs.

Ha! An idea popped into his ugly old head.—He would scare one of the fawns off the edge of the precipice, and it would leap to its death on the rocks below; and then he could wait till Fleet Foot had gone, for his feast.

Swooping lower and lower, while still the foolish fawns stared innocently at the dancing shadow, he suddenly flapped his wings about the tinier fawn, startling him terribly, but not enough to make him back off the cliff.

Stronger measures must be tried,—and there was no time to waste; for at the fawn's first bleat of terror, Fleet Foot heard and was now leaping like the wind, back the trail to his rescue.

Swooping again, Baldy began beating the little fellow with great heavy blows of his middle wing joints. It hurt dreadfully, and the frightened fawn turned first this way, then that, in his endeavor to get away. Nearer and nearer the edge of the precipice he crowded. Now one hind foot had actually slipped off the rock face, and he had to struggle to regain his balance.

Then the one thing happened that could have saved him. Fleet Foot reached the spot. Rearing furiously on her hind legs, she struck at Baldy's head with her sharp hoofs, tearing great wounds in his scalp. Then, with a scream of rage and pain, he raised his wings and slanted swiftly upward, wings hissing, to his granite peak.

The fawn was not seriously hurt,—only terribly frightened. His back was bruised, but that would heal, and he would be none the worse for his experience.

But where was the other fawn?—They found him wedged in between the boulders, —the one place where he could ever have escaped the beat of those wings. Fleet Foot

praised him mightily for having so much sense, and he felt quite cocky,—though of course his brother was the real hero of the day.

One other danger marred their summer.

Every now and again, as they were passing beneath some low-hanging branch, they would catch a glimpse of a tawny form flattened along the limb, watching them with pale yellow eyes that gleamed through narrowed lids.

Perhaps it would be in a deep, dark hemlock thicket, or a cedar swamp, that they would meet the giant cat.

He was a ferocious-looking fellow, was Old Man Lynx, with his great, square, whiskered face, and his ears with their black tassels and the black stripe down the middle of his back. And my, how his claws crunched the bark as he sharpened them! How his whiskers twitched and his mouth watered as the fawns passed beneath him! He seemed all teeth and claws.

Perhaps the little family would be drowsing peacefully in the shade of a long Sep-

tember afternoon when suddenly some spirit of their ancestors, (or was it some guardian angel of their antlered tribe?) would whisper *"Danger!"* and set their fur to rising along their spines in a cold shiver of nameless fear.

Had Old Man Lynx ever really put it to the test, he could have won out with Fleet Foot. But he knew the sharp drive of her little hoofs, and he was terribly afraid of pain. (Did he not wear a great scar in his side, due to an adventure of his rash young days, when a fat buck had given him a rip with his antlers?)

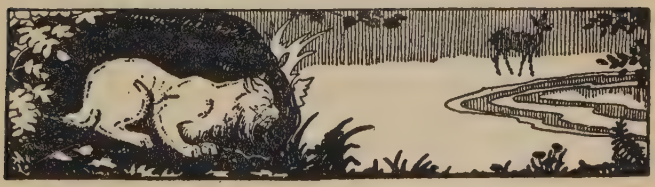
Perhaps that was why Fleet Foot always raced away in a wide curve that presently brought her back to where she could peer curiously at the invader of her solitude, without herself being seen.

She used to spy in the same way on Old Man Red Fox, and Frisky, his promising young hopeful.

In fact, what with Frisky spying on the fawns, and the fawns watching Frisky, these

children of hostile tribes kept pretty close track of one another.

The summer passed on the whole, however, with no more adventure than the sound of the lonely "Hoo-woo-o-o-o" of a loon at twilight, or the sudden whirr of a startled pheasant's wings, or a quarrel between some wicked red squirrel caught robbing a crow's nest. (Or was it a crow that had robbed the squirrel's little hoard, and was getting handsomely scolded for his villainy?).



CHAPTER X.

WILD GRAPES.

It had been one of those cool, crisp days when the sun shone just warm enough to feel good to the furred and feathered folk.

Frisky, the Red Fox Pup, had been creeping up on a flying squirrel, who sat nibbling the ripe berries of the Solomon's Seal with her three little ones beside her, when the entire family took alarm and went leaping back to the beech-nut tree.

Now Frisky had not reached the age of six whole months in vain. He had sharp eyes, and he used them. And he had never seen a squirrel that could spread sail like that. He felt that his eyes must have deceived him.

He forgot his surprise at the very next

turn of the trail, when he suddenly spied a tangle of wild grape vine that hung in a canopy of the luscious purple clusters over the stag-horn sumac.

Frisky Fox had never seen wild grapes before, though he had often passed the vines when the fruit was green. Now his keen little nose told him enough to make him eager for a taste.

But the fruit hung just too high. Leaping into the air, he occasionally got a nibble from the low-hanging bunches. But these only served to whet his appetite for more.

To add to his discontent, Fairy the Flying Squirrel suddenly sailed down from a tree-top, alighting on the very top of the grape-vine canopy. And there she perched saucily and munched and sucked at grape after grape before his very eyes.

This was too much for Frisky. Around and around the vines he circled, screwing up his courage for a leap.

He finally discovered a place where the vine hugged a slanting tree trunk, and he climbed as far as he could.

The next instant Fairy had sailed back to her branch as easily as if she had been laughing at him. But Frisky didn't mind that. It would take just a stretch of his neck and his jaws would close on a great cluster of the fragrant fruit.

If young Frisky Fox had only been content with that one taste, all might have been well. But just beyond was a larger bunch. Frisky gave a leap, landing on his tip-toes on crossed vines. But the vines parted beneath his weight, and down he plunged—almost to the ground, but not quite. Not far enough for a foot-hold.

And there he hung, head downward, hind legs tangled in the vines, unable to better his position!

My, how he writhed and squirmed, and bit at the vine that shackled him! But to no avail! He was a prisoner, just as surely as if he had been tied with a rope. Little his brains availed him now.

If any one had asked young Frisky Fox, as he hung head downward from that grapevine, what he thought of the situa-

tion, he would have said it couldn't be worse.

Yet it speedily became worse,—so much worse, indeed, that Frisky redoubled his efforts to free himself,—though he had an awful feeling that it was no use.

It was Tattle-tale the Jay who warned him.

Tattle-tale kept pretty close track of all that went on in the forest, and then told all he knew.

So many times had he flown ahead of Frisky Fox, screaming at the top of his lungs: "A Fox! A Fox! Beware!" that Frisky had come to dread the sound of his voice.

This time Tattle-tale, who played no favorites, was doing Frisky a good turn, but the little fox was in no position to appreciate the fact.

"Look out, there! Look out, everybody," Tattle-tale was screaming. "Old Man Lynx is coming!"

"Old Man Lynx!" squeaked Shadow Tail, the Red Squirrel, making for his hole in the oak tree.

"OLD MAN LYNX, Mammy, Old Man Lynx!" squealed Timothy Cottontail, hopping madly for a hollow log.

"Old Man Lynx!" grunted Unk Wunk, the Porcupine. "A lot I care!" And he rolled himself up into a prickly ball in the top of a swaying birch tree.

"Old Man Lynx!" thought Frisky Fox, fairly beside himself with frenzy. Hanging there heels uppermost in the grapevine, he was as helpless as a mouse in a trap. And here was the great cat, his ancient enemy, creeping, creeping, creeping through the shadows, his nose sniffing this way and that for the scent that would tell him where to find a good supper.

Another moment and out of the tail of his eye he saw the great, heavy, bob-tailed cat, with his cruel face, squared off with a fringe of whiskers that framed his chin, and sharp ears tasseled with little tufts of fur at their tips.

The yellow eyes gleamed evilly as Old Man Lynx caught sight of Frisky hanging there

so helplessly, and his grizzled gray-brown fur rose along his spine.

Now he was wriggling along the ground flattened out like a snake. Now he was creeping up the tree trunk as silently as a shadow, and now he was gathering his legs beneath him for the leap that would land him squarely on Frisky Fox.

Frisky knew that one crunch of those gleaming teeth would end it all, so far as the Red Fox Pup was concerned.

But Frisky had a trick up his sleeve. His wits were still in working order.

"What a pity!" sighed Shadow Tail, the Red Squirrel, as he peered from his hole in the oak tree.

For Old Man Lynx had no objection whatever to having fox for supper. The only objection he had to foxes was that he could never catch one.

For to look at poor Frisky Fox, his red-brown fur still soft and silky, his black feet tapering so delicately and his white throat exposed, it didn't seem as if he had a show in the world of escaping the huge cat.

But Old Man Lynx was stupid. He had nothing but his powerful muscles and his murderous teeth and claws, whereas Frisky had the nimble wit of one who lives by being both hunter and hunted.

And even as he waited for the leap for which he saw the Lynx preparing, he thought of a way out of both the grapevine and the danger he was in.

The next instant the Old Man gave one of his blood-curdling screeches, by which he so often paralyzed his prey with fright. Then he dropped to the branch just above, claws out for Frisky Fox.

But the very instant his heavy form touched the tangled vines, they gave way beneath him, and he, too, went crashing down in a net-work that held him fast. And, what's more, his huge weight loosed the vines that held Frisky prisoner.

But wait! With his great steel claws the giant cat wrenched himself free. Frisky made for a clump of greenbriar, for his leg had gone to sleep, and he couldn't run right till it had had time to wake up.

Was Old Man Lynx to get him after all?

There was only one reason why he didn't —he had no great fondness for brambles. Cats, wild and tame, are mighty fond of their own skins, and Old Man Lynx was no exception. He'd have to be mighty hungry before he'd either scratch his fur out or get it wet.

While Old Man Lynx thought it over, Frisky Fox was certainly not standing still. Not Frisky! He was struggling so hard to tear himself free that the brambles were all trimmed up with little tufts of his tawny coat.

That the gray form crouched so near him meant to spring he could easily guess, and his heart thumped so loudly in his furry chest that he could hardly breathe. Eyes straining wide with fright, as he tugged this way and that, (for he was really caught fast again), he suffered far more from terror than from the pain of the brambles. His leg was awake now, and with one last twinge he wrenched himself loose.

At the same instant the great gray cat launched itself almost upon him.

But Frisky was too quick for it. By the time Old Man Lynx had reached the spot, Frisky was tearing down the slope.

Now lynxes have poor eyesight. Following their nose is their one best guide. Of this Frisky was aware, as his mother had told him so.

He could hear the great cat scrambling after him at a terrific pace. But he was going too fast to try any dodges, for one stumble and the other would be upon him. If it had been Mother Red Fox, she could have laughed at her pursuer. But Frisky was only a pup, remember, and his short legs had all they could do to keep ahead of such a big fellow.

Just as he was beginning to wonder how long this would keep up, he recalled something else his mother had taught him. Lynxes cannot swim. At least, they won't. The river was just off to the left, and with a quick turn and a sidewise leap that might or might not throw the Old Man off his scent, he dashed for the water.

On the very brink of the moonlit current,

he suddenly remembered one thing more. The last time he had tried that swim he had let his tail get so wet and heavy that he had only reached the other bank by hanging on to his father's brush. Now there was no one to tow him. Should he risk it, or was he safer where he was?

To cross or not to cross, that was the question before him.

If he trusted his fate to the current, he might drown. And if he remained on the same side with Old Man Lynx, he might meet another fate.

There was but a heart's beat to decide.

Ah! What was that dark object just upstream? Could it be a log? What luck! Frisky veered to the right, his long agile leaps once more outdistancing the merciless form behind him.

He reached the log. Alas, it reached only half way across! But he raced that half. Then one of his powerful forward leaps and he had landed within easy swimming distance of the other shore!

Old Man Lynx stood raging on the bank

he had left, afraid to risk it. His disappointed screech sent shivers along Frisky's spine, but he knew he was safe.

Pup-like, no sooner was his mind relieved of worry than he burrowed into an old gopher hole and fell fast asleep.

CHAPTER XI.

SPECKLED TROUT.

The still warmth of Indian summer passed, with its dreamy days and its crisp nights ablaze with twinkling stars.

And Fleet Foot left the fawns to shift more and more for themselves,—though they still followed her about. At first they were puzzled and a little hurt by her growing indifference. Then, as they began to feel the strength of their coming buck-hood, they began to enjoy their taste of freedom.

Indeed, the little rascals even began to watch the bucks, (their big cousins and uncles), who were returning in little bands from their summer's wanderings. Some day they, too, would have those lordly ant-

lers, and they, too, could join their bachelor explorations, while the does and younger fawns remained safely behind in the lowlands.

Now no longer could they hear Vesper Sparrow trilling in the meadows and locusts twanging in the tree-tops. The brook beds were drying, and the deer now pastured along the sedgy shore-line of Lone Lake or splashed knee-deep in the shallows, while here and there the scarlet of a maple told of approaching winter.

No longer did the gabbling of countless ducks fill their ears when the pink sunsets tinted the Lake. Instead, there were many V-shaped flocks constantly migrating to the Southland, where the waters would not freeze.

Now it was that the speckled trout, whom all summer long they had watched flashing silvery through the shallows, began putting on their coats of many colors.—At least the bride-grooms did. The prospective brides remained a quiet brown, for reasons the fawns were soon to learn. (For October is

the month when trout start housekeeping together.)

In the early summer the fawns had watched these same finny fellows racing and leaping up the water-falls to the rapids. With the long, hot days, they had taken to the deep, shadowy pools—those watery caverns that afford such peaceful coolness everywhere along Beaver Brook.

Now as the woods turned red and gold, the trout changed their cream colored vests to the most vivid orange, which looked gay enough with their red and white fins.

Their coats were still olive-green, mottled with darker splotches, and on their sides the green melted into yellow, with the little red spots and speckles that give the trout their name.

Their thousands of tiny scales were like suits of mail,—which came in very handy when they fought, as you shall see.

Now the fawns noticed that the larger and brighter colored fish were prospecting around in the shallows, where the water ran fastest, shoveling the gravel about with their

bony noses, aided by their tails. Each trout soon had a little nest scooped out in the stream bed, and over it he stood guard, (or perhaps we ought to say *swam* guard), defending his homestead against all comers.

Sometimes a larger trout would come by and try to steal the nest of a smaller fish; and then what a fight they had! How they butted each other about, ramming each other's soft sides, and even, at times, biting each other on the lip. It must have hurt dreadfully, because each trout had a mouthful of the sharpest teeth, that turned backward, so that when they caught a worm he was hooked as surely as he would be on the end of a fish-line.

In trout-land, you know, it is the father of the family that makes the nest. He it is who wears the gayest clothing, too,—because if the mother were too bright colored, her enemies could see her on her nest.

Once the nests were ready the mother trout came swimming upstream and promptly set to work filling them with leathery yellow-brown eggs, which they cov-

ered with gravel so that no pike or other cannibal of the river's bottom could find and make a breakfast off of them.

The fawns marveled as they watched, day after day, till at last the trout all went back into deep water for the winter, leaving the eggs behind them. And Fleet Foot explained how, next spring, each leathery brown egg that had escaped the cannibal fish and the musk-rats would be burst open by the baby trout inside, and out would wiggle the teeniest, weeniest troutlet you can possibly imagine!

CHAPTER XII.

THE VICTOR.

One evening when the frost lay glittering in the moonlight, the fawns were suddenly awakened, in their soft beds of drifted leaves, by a loud belling down on the lake shore; and wide-eyed, they tip-toed down to see what it meant.

There on the muddy beach—stamped with long lines of little cloven hoof prints—stood a handsome buck, with polished antlers, dancing about as if too full of energy to stand still.

Now the fawns had never seen their father, for he had been killed by a hunter. And the other bucks of the herd had been

rambling about all summer in the higher hills.

They now saw Fleet Foot mince daintily down to inspect the new-comer, who was belling his greeting at the top of his lungs.

But the meeting was brought to a sudden end. For out of the woods pranced another buck, belling a saucy challenge to a fight. Fleet Foot withdrew to a safe distance, as did the fawns, and watched admiringly as the two bucks came together; and the excitement, no less than the keen, frosty air, set the blood to racing hot through their young veins.

Stamping their steel-shod hoofs defiantly and tossing their antlered heads in the pride of their strength, the two bucks bellowed their battle challenge.

"Well, where did *you* come from?" shrilled Fleet Foot's champion.

"Never mind that. I've come to stay," bellowed the new-comer. "If either of us has got to go, it will be yourself, because I'm the strongest."

"Not if I know myself!"

"Look out! The strongest wins!"

"Yes, the strongest wins. So look out for your own self!" and the first buck gave a shrill snort of defiance.

Straightway the pair began dancing a sort of war-dance around each other. Slim and supple, they looked about equally fit.

Fleet Foot stepped gracefully a little nearer, and stood looking on, with her back to the fawns,—who thought best to keep their distance. They noticed that another little audience had gathered on the opposite side of the lake,—a couple of yearling bucks with proud spikes of horns and three with two-pronged antlers.

Around and around the two combatants tip-toed, heads flung back, chins in air. Then they lowered their antlers like shields, and Fleet Foot's champion got in a good dig at the other's ribs. With a bellow of rage, the second buck came plunging, and the two crashed together, antlers against antlers. Their sharp hoofs fairly ploughed the ground as they strove and struggled and

pushed each other about, the very whites of their eyes showing in their rage.

"There's ginger for you!" thought the fawns.

Now the fighting pair were shouldering each other about roughly with their horns, lips foaming, gasping for breath,—almost locking horns in a butting match. At last the first buck lifted his knife-edged fore-legs and struck at the intruder. The next moment he was belling in triumph, for he had cut a great gash in the other's shoulder, and the latter had had enough.

The victor now turned for the look of admiration he felt he ought to find in Fleet Foot's eyes. But instead, he barely caught a glimpse of her dancing away through the thicket, with just one merry backward glance to see if he would race her.

But he knew where to follow; for there was the faintest, loveliest perfume on the air where she had passed.

The fawns gazed after the pair, as they disappeared, then found themselves alone. All that month, while the woods turned from

scarlet and yellow to brown and gray, and the nights grew frosty under the stars, the fawns were left very much to their own devices. But they were well capable of looking out for themselves at this time of year, for they found a beech wood and began fattening on the beech nuts against the increasing chill.

Their coats were changing from tawny red to bluish gray, and their fur thickening to keep a layer of warm air next their skins. There were coarser hairs growing out as well, that helped to shed the rain. Their new fur glistened in the sunshine, and the fawns raced and hurdled in the keen air, and took running high jumps to work off their surplus energy.

Then Fleet Foot and the winning buck returned, and with them came two of the young bucks who had watched the battle. The six ranged happily from cranberry bog to evergreen swamp, feasting, feasting, feasting on mosses, lichens, anything and everything that grew, till their sides rounded with their winter plumpness, and a layer of

warm fat lay just underneath their skins.

But with the first powdering of snow came a new danger. The hunting season had opened, and to the huntsman our little family meant merely a few pounds of venison for his table, and the pride of a pair of antlers to hang his gun upon.

To the buck, however, one little bullet might in an instant rob him of life and the keen joy of his airy speed, and all the glad wonderful world about them, and leave his family defenseless through the long, hard winter.

He was therefore more than wary. With the first crash of the Hired Man's thunder stick, he led his little herd to a distant cedar swamp, where they were soon joined by other groups as nervous as themselves at this new peril that could pick them out and wound them from so far away.

Sometimes, even then, a member of the band would have a race for his life.—And sometimes he never came back! But Fleet Foot and her five pulled through in safety.

Then the thunder stick ceased to roar in

the woods about Mount Olaf. The "season" was over, and the entire band set about making active preparations for the on-coming winter. Already there were chill, drizzly days when all the world looked gray.

The former rivals now chewed their cuds together as peacefully as you please, the bucks sleeping on one side of the thicket, the does and their fawns on the other.

Then came a big surprise for the fawns.

It was a surprise for the Red Fox Pup as well.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE QUEER FEATHERS.

Frisky, the Red Fox Pup, had learned many lessons since the day he so nearly hanged himself in the wild grape-vines.

There was the day of the first snow, for instance.

Awakening one morning, cramped and chilled because he had not lined his bed deeply enough with leaves to keep off the cold, he peered from his little den on the hillside with wide eyes.

The air seemed filled, as far as he could see, with tiny white feathers, and the ground was covered with them.

He peered this way and that, wondering what kind of birds they could be whose

plumage was being shed so freely. It must be a flock large enough to cover the whole sky, he decided, mystified.

He crept stealthily from the den, afraid, because he did not understand.

The instant his black feet touched the cold stuff, he leaped high into the air, with a yip of fright and amazement. But when he opened his mouth he got a taste of the falling flakes.

"Ha!" he said to himself, "that accounts for it. It is just rain turned white."

Still, he crept warily down to Pollywog Pond for his breakfast, stepping high, because he hated wet feet.

Arrived at the pond he stopped for a drink, when his lapping tongue came plump against a film of something hard and shining that seemed to cover the water. What could it be, he asked himself, lapping up a mouthful of the snow-flakes to ease his thirst. (He wisely held them in his mouth till they had melted, for fear of chilling his stomach.)

It was certainly very queer. Now the very trees were beginning to be outlined in

white. It made the world look quite a different place.

As for the deer, they took to a thicket of poplar, birch and spruce, on which they could feed when the snow lay deep.

There was one other to whom winter brought a change and that was Old Man Lynx.

Now it is very, very seldom that good luck falls right at one's feet undeserved.

So Old Man Lynx warned himself when he came upon the musk-rat in the trap.

Of course the giant cat did not know it was a trap, as he circled around and around the struggling rat. His green eyes gleamed hungrily in his tawny face, and he crouched so close to the snow crust that his whiskers dragged on the ground. His tasseled ears twitched nervously, his stubby tail thrashed the earth and his claws were bared in a fringe across the great awkward paws, as he crept nearer and nearer the struggling bait.

To the nostrils of the cat tribe the musky smell of the water-rat is most tempting, and his mouth watered till he licked his jaws at

thought of the feast within such easy reach.

And yet—and yet—some spirit of the wild —some instinct of the dumb brute who must fight to live—seemed to warn him that where man had been, there would be trouble for him. And he circled his prey without quite daring to close in upon it and end its squeaking protest.

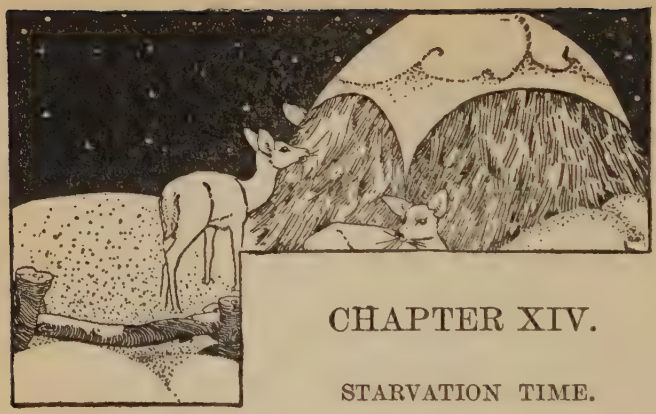
Now the Hired Man at the Valley Farm had not meant the trap for Old Man Lynx. He had placed it there on the bare chance of there being a wolf at large in the forest around Mount Olaf.

As the midwinter dawn deepened from salmon to rose, and the snow began to glitter in the sun's first rays, Old Man Lynx decided that the thing was altogether too mysterious to be wholesome. Instead, he trotted down to Lone Lake, where muskrats were supposed to be. And he promised himself that even were it too late in the day to catch a rat, he could at least afford the pleasure of sniffing at the chimneys to their round houses,—those air-holes in the top, where their musky breath steamed out, while the

rats themselves lay snug and warm within.

Then, suddenly, just as Old Man Lynx was passing a snow-laden clump of spruces, he caught a little movement in their lower branches. Circling till he had the ribbon of the wind in his nostrils, he discovered that it was a covey of grouse.

Grouse! How infinitely more delicious than muskrat—more tender even than rabbit! Now indeed he was glad he had saved his appetite.



CHAPTER XIV.

STARVATION TIME.

Fleet Foot, the Doe, would never have dreamed of taking her fawns down to the hay-stack at the Valley Farm, had not the Farmer and his Boy set her leg the summer before, and gained her confidence by their kindness.

But, though the herd had selected a southwest slope where the feeding was good, and though they had trampled the snow till it raised them higher and higher, and they could browse on the limbs of the fir trees, it was proving a cruel winter. As blizzard followed blizzard, and bark and browse alike were frozen stiff, they huddled together, weak with hunger.

Then the thought of the big hay-mow provided for the sheep and cattle proved too much for Fleet Foot, and she resolved to take the fawns, (now well grown,) slip down under cover of the early winter dusk, and there help herself to the few mouthfuls she could reach through the bars. For part of the hay stood in the open meadow, with only a canvas over top to keep it dry, and a few bars to keep it from being blown away.

The other deer of the herd, though they were starving, were far too timid to make the venture with her. To them it seemed a perilous undertaking to go so near humankind. For they had seen many things in the woods. They had seen the Hired Man with his long black stick that spoke like thunder, and killed more surely than tooth or claw. They preferred to starve!

For Fleet Foot, the dangers of traveling alone with the fawns through the winter woods were many. First there was the chance of meeting Old Man Lynx. For now they would not have the protection of the hoofs and horns of the herd.

Then they might get lost and freeze, should another storm catch them far from the herd-yard. But, once having made up her mind, Fleet Foot whistled to the fawns and started off in a series of long, graceful bounds that carried them over one snow-bank after another.

Had they dared delay, they would have sunk to their knees in the hard, dry snow to rest for a while and nibble the tops of some bush that promised a few mouthfuls of supper, for their empty stomachs fairly hurt. And if it had been freezing in the herd-yard, with its wall of snow, and the crowding bodies that helped keep each other warm, imagine how cold Fleet Foot's little family must have been, out on the open hill-top! The savage wind and the snow-filled air made it all but impossible at times to draw breath.

But worst of all was the shadow of fear that never left the doe's anxious mother heart. The tree-trunks crackled alarmingly with the frost, keeping her alert for enemies, and the wind tore savagely through the

brush. Of a sudden Fleet Foot's spine began to prickle! It was one of those mysterious things that she had never been able to account for. But it usually meant danger!

Half blindly, they had been making their way, hardly able to see in the green-black of the darkness. But they marked their path by the darker blackness of the clumps of spruce trees, which to their trained instinct pointed the way like a map.

Again a chill ran down their spine and the hair raised along the backs of their necks! Some instinct told them real danger was near—what danger, they could not know. Rolling their startled eyes behind them, they could see points of light gleaming at them through the darkness.

At length, through the winter night, came a long, shrill cry like that of a hound, only wilder and more terrifying. Then came another, and a third. It was an uncanny sound, that of the three gray wolves, watching from behind the snowy evergreens.

Fleet Foot knew, more by instinct than experience, what they were, for their like she

had never seen before. Nor had any one in those woods known a winter when these ravenous beasts had come down out of the Canadian wilds. But it had been handed down from grand-sire to grand-son that once, when the snows were uncommonly deep, and half the wild folk starved and frozen, wolves had come down from the far North in search of prey.

There were three of the lean gray shapes, like collie dogs, yet so much larger and fiercer—large enough to attack even bigger game than Fleet Foot, the doe.

Should worst come to worst, she would have no more chance with even one such foe than a rabbit with a hound. It would all be a matter of which could run the faster. And she had to look out for the fawns!

Their one chance of escape lay in their nimble heels. They might, for a time, outspeed their enemies, if their strength held out. The combined hoofs and antlers of the herd might have fought off the beasts for a time, but the herd-yard was now too far away for Fleet Foot ever to reach it with the

fawns before those lean gray shapes would be at their throats. The Valley Farm lay straight ahead, and her fear of man shrank to nothing beside the terrors behind her.

Yes, the one hope on the horizon lay at the Valley Farm, where the fear of man might keep the wolves from following.

And to the Farm Fleet Foot and the fawns now sped with their great, bounding strides that took whole drifts at a leap. Would their feet slip in the darkness, crippling them and leaving them helpless almost within sight of safety?

On and on they ran, and behind them through the forest crept the three gray shapes, slinking along like shadows with glowing coals for eyes. Every now and again their barking howl, long drawn out and fearful, tore the darkness. Could they reach the Valley Farm, Fleet Foot asked herself with pounding heart?

It was hard going through the powdery snow, into which she sank dangerously every time she came to a drift too wide to leap. And the fawns were having an even harder

time, the cold cutting into their lungs till it hurt.

At last, straight ahead, gleamed the dim lighted windows of the farmhouse. A few more bursts of speed would get them over the fence and into the pasture lot, and perhaps the wolves would stop at the boundary of man's domain. But—could they make it? Could they reach that fence before their grim pursuers?

Their eyes were fairly popping with the effort they were making. Here was a mammoth drift that in summer had been a creek, and there a patch of the higher wind-swept ground where the ice might take their hoofs from under them.

Ah! The fence at last! One leap over its smooth pyramid, and with a sobbing cough, Fleet Foot and the fawns were safe, with the wolves not ten paces behind!

Then, suddenly, the door at the farmhouse opened, throwing a long streak of lamp-light across the snow!

The wolves slunk back in fear. But so, too, did Fleet Foot. The terror of the great

gray beasts behind her, all her old fear of man flooded back upon her, and what to do she did not know. She dared not go back, nor could she go forward. So she stood stock still, her fawns huddling, trembling against her sides. The sudden light half-blinded her, and made the darkness blacker. What could be its meaning? Curiosity might, at another time, have conquered fear, but now she was trembling in every joint, her spent lungs wheezing with the effort she had made. This was far different from slipping in under cover of darkness as she had planned.

"Father! Come quick! I do believe there is a deer out there—no, a doe, and two fawns!" cried the Boy of the Valley Farm, as the light from the open door threw a long ray across the barn-yard to the pasture beyond.

"Wait! I'll get her for you!" exclaimed the Hired Man, springing for his gun. But at the Boy's sharp command he dropped it, shame-faced.

Then from farther back in the evergreens

came the spine-chilling howl of the gray wolves, baying their lost prey.

"Wolves, my son!" exclaimed the Farmer, joining the group in the doorway. "Wolves from Canada. It's a hard winter that has brought *them* down. I don't remember seeing wolves since I was a little shaver, forty years ago. And I expect that is what has driven the deer so close. Sh! Come outside." The two closed the door behind them. "We mustn't frighten them away, or the wolves will get them, sure."

CHAPTER XV.

THE GRAY WOLVES.

"That's what I heard," exclaimed the Boy at the Valley Farm. "Wolves! Imagine! I didn't suppose they ever came into these woods."

"It's been an unusual winter," his father assured him, stepping out into the snowy barn-yard. "I saw them once when I was ten years old. But I thought they had been driven away for good. I suppose the rabbits all froze, up where they come from, and they got so starved they were driven to it. They've certainly been chasing these deer."

For as their eyes became accustomed to the snowy darkness, they could once more see

the shadowy forms of Fleet Foot and the fawns by the hay-mow.

"It must have been those wolves that I heard ten minutes back," said the Farmer, rubbing his unmittened hands together.

"Just see how hollow these poor things look!" exclaimed the Boy. "They must be starving. Let's go back inside, so they won't be afraid."

They met the Hired Man just starting forth with his gun. "I'm going for those wolves," he hastened to explain.

"That's more like it," said the Farmer.

Here they were at last, beside the hay-stack, Fleet Foot and her fawns. And as three disappointed howls arose from the woods at their back, the famished deer turned to snatch their first ravenous mouthfuls from between the bars of the crib. They paused in their banquet only long enough to stare at the Hired Man, as with snow-shoes strapped to his feet, he strode down the Old Logging Road,—Lop Ear, the Hound, at his heels.

"Who-o-o-o!" howled the three gray

wolves from the blackness of the woods. The Hired Man raised his thunder-stick and fired—straight between a pair of the red eyes that gleamed at him through the night.

"Yoo-o-o-o!" screamed one of the wolves, as he fell, while the cries of the other two retreated into the forest. And Whoo Lee, the great barred owl, could have told you that they carried their tails between their legs. Their weird voices faded rapidly into the depths of the woods; for wolves travel fast on their round, furry feet, which spread out beneath them like round snow-shoes.

The Hired Man strode on down the Old Logging Road, past the charred trunks which the forest fire had swept,—standing like white ghosts now in their snowy mantles,—and on nearly to Lone Lake. But never a sign of the gleaming eyes of the two remaining wolves could he see, though his ears shuddered at the weird howls that rang down the wind, and Lop Ear bristled and growled.

Fleet Foot and the starving fawns nibbled and nibbled at the haymow,—for the time, at

least, safe and happy. But could they ever get back to the herd-yard, with those wolves still at large?

For once they were in luck. The Hired Man was not the only hunter who followed the wolves that night. Old Man Lynx, that fierce, furry fellow with tassels on his ears and claws that could rend like steel hooks, had also been driven down to the Valley by the winter's famine. He, too, heard the howling of the wolves.

He heard the piercing scream of the wolf the Hired Man had shot, and he knew what it meant. The lynx was hungry, for the storms had lasted many days, and the rabbits and grouse hens hid away where he could not find them. On his own wide, spreading paws, therefore, he set out over the snow to find the wolf that had fallen. His heart was glad at the unexpected feast in store, and he whined hungrily under his breath.

Every now and again he had to pause to bite off the icy balls that had formed under his warm feet. But before ever the Hired Man had turned back from Lone Lake, Old

Man Lynx was peering and sniffing at the wolf that lay dead.

One thing he did not know, though. No sooner had the two remaining wolves raced to Lone Lake, with their tails between their legs, and the roar of the thunder-stick in their ears, than it occurred to them that they were still ravenously hungry. And the one that had fallen would go far toward easing that terrible emptiness that drew their sides together and made them desperate. (For wolves are cannibals!)

So, back the horrid beasts came, running on their furry snow-shoes—back down the wind, which told the noses of these great wild dogs as plainly as words that Old Man Lynx was there before them.

"Who-o-o-o," they howled wrathfully, speeding back through the burnt-wood, over whose ghost-like trunks they leapt in the darkness so fast that no Hired Man could have shot them had he tried.

Old Man Lynx raised his whiskered face and yowled an answering challenge.

"Ye-ow-w-w!" he screamed at them defiantly. Then he bent his head to snatch another mouthful of the meat he knew the wolves were on their way to claim.

"Ye-ow-w-w!" he screamed again, as the wolf cry swept nearer. This time he saw two pairs of red eyes gleaming in the darkness.

"I got here first, and I'll make it hot for the first one that comes within reach of my claws," he warned them, in tones they understood without words.

"We are two to your one!" they answered him.

Little did Old Man Lynx imagine that he had an ally so near. To him it was merely a case of having found a meal in the wolf the Hired Man had shot, and of having the rest of the pack demand it of him. So the giant cat took his stand, with claws outspread over the prize, his savage face tense with hate. His green eyes blazed at them through the darkness.

The cowardly wolves paused just out of

reach, neither one of them quite daring to begin the attack, yet willing to fall in, should the other go first, for both were wild with hunger.

Old Man Lynx was not afraid. He meant merely to meet each wolf as he came, and fight him off with tooth and claw—or if worst came to worst, he could climb the nearest tree. For the power to climb is the one great advantage that cats have over all members of the dog tribe.

Old Man Lynx himself was lean with famine, for the great storm had made hunting all but impossible for him. Not so much as a wood-mouse had shown its tracks on the snow for days. And there had been nothing in his rocky den save the dried and frozen bones of dinners long since past.

To surrender his supper to-night might mean starvation and actual death to him. But so it did to the wolves. It was to be a fight for life!

Now a lynx's claws are like so many little curved swords of poisoned steel,—and he had

five on each foot. He could dig at a wolf's unprotected sides with his hind legs while his fore legs were clinging to the throat in which he would try to fasten his fangs.

The gray wolves knew all this, for Old Man Lynx visited the same Canadian wilds that they had come from. But even so, in another moment they had taken the leap—*together!* And there was more lynx fur flying than wolf fur—as Whoo Lee, the owl overhead, could have told you.

Just in the nick of time for Old Man Lynx, the Hired Man returned. When he heard the shrill chorus of returning wolves, he had hastened back, his great snow-shoes shuffling their way down the Old Logging Road at a speed of which he had not known them capable.

He was not thinking of Fleet Foot and the fawns. But with the barn full of cattle, it would never do to leave such beasts at large in the forest. When he heard Old Man Lynx, however, the Hired Man understood just what was going on. He had not lived in the

back-woods for nothing all his days. And he decided to draw a little nearer, in the hope of getting another shot or two at the great gray terrors from the North.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE FARMER'S PLAN.

It was thus at the very moment that Old Man Lynx was striking out with bared claws, and the gray wolves were closing in on him both at once, that his unexpected ally reached the scene.

The Hired Man raised his gun, pointing it straight between two gleaming eyes that shone out in the darkness. He had to do it quickly, they jumped about so fast. Then a shot rang out on the silent night!

It singed a streak across the lynx's flank, —but it felled the wolf whose jaws were just about to clamp about his leg. A second shot nicked the tasseled ear of the great cat fight-

ing so desperately. But it singed the fur on the neck of the second wolf, just in time to check him, as his fangs were finding their way through the thick fur ruff that protected the lynx's throat. At this second shot, the wolf, with a howl of terror, tucked his tail between his legs and ran.

The Hired Man hesitated, then decided that the lynx had won the right to live by his pluck. Thus Old Man Lynx was left, somewhat the worse for the meeting, but still able to enjoy the rest of his meal; while the Hired Man, counting the night well spent, shuffled home on his snow-shoes. But there was still a gaunt gray wolf at large in the forest—and Fleet Foot and the fawns had still to get back to the herd-yard before morning found them in the haunts of man!

But strange things can happen. No sooner had the lone gray wolf fled from the unexpected slaughter than the wind shifted, and he caught an odor most agreeable to his palate. For his gaunt sides were so hollow that every rib showed. It was an odor he had never before followed up. He had not met it

in his Northern wilds, but it smelled porky and delicious.

It was on the trunk of a wild apple tree that he found the little round bristly fellow. And he could see, by the gray light of dawn, that his black sides bulged with fat, in a winter when all the furry folk were lean and hungry.

That alone was puzzling. But what surprised him even more was that this queer fellow showed no sign of fear. He was singing a little song, all in one flat key—"Unk-wunk, unk-wunk, unk-wunk." It was a young porcupine, one of these prickly fellows so like a tiny bear, only with long black needles instead of fur. The gray wolf did not know how terrible those needle-like quills can be, when once they get in one's paw. For they are barbed like a hook on the end, and when they stick into one, it hurts worse to pull them out than to leave them where they are. The wood folk that lived around Lone Lake knew enough to leave Unk-Wunk strictly alone. So, he was never afraid. But the wolf did not know. And when the little

porcupine, instead of climbing higher, out of his reach, came lazily back down the trunk and began to gnaw the frozen bark, the wolf thought it was easy game.

Thus, without so much as wondering what made this strange beast so fearless, he leaped open-jawed upon the little porcupine. There was just one howl of agony, as he clamped his jaws on those barbed quills, and it was not the porcupine who gave it!

Whining and clawing at his tortured mouth, the wolf rolled about in the snow-drift, choking and spluttering in mingled wrath and terror. For Unk-Wunk's terrible barbed quills were working deeper and deeper into the roof of his mouth. Finally he rolled over on them, and they pierced through to the brain. That was the last of the great gray wolf that had come down out of the North to prey upon the forest folk around the Valley Farm.

Unk-Wunk, without in the least realizing that he had done so, had performed a public service. And in particular, he had made it safe for Fleet Foot and her fawns to go back

home to the deer yard in the gray of the winter dawn.

"I tell you what," said the Farmer to his son next day. "I've a plan that I think will interest you."

"What is it?" asked the Boy, eagerly.

"Just this: I've plenty of hay this year, (more than enough for the stock,) and I'm going to pitch a little of it out, after this, every time the storms make it hard for the deer. I declare, I can't bear to think of their being so starved!" And he gazed thoughtfully out over the drifting snow, as he thought how Fleet Foot had braved everything to reach their hay-stack.

"Hurray!" shouted the Boy. "May I pitch some out right now? Poor things, there wasn't much they could reach between the bars," and he gazed at the dainty footprints the fawns had made the night before.

The deep, dry snow was followed by a freeze that left a glistening crust over every drift. Once more Fleet Foot and the rest of the deer could run nimbly on their spreading hoofs; and young Frisky Fox and

Mother Grouse Hen and Mammy Cotton tail, the brown bunny, could foot their way across the white expanse in search of food. For they were sure of at least a fighting chance of getting home again.

Fleet Foot and the fawns, returning every night to the haystack, with a little band whose sides were as pinched with hunger as their own, now passed Old Man Lynx without a fear. For where there was footing that would bear their weight, they knew they could outspeed him.

Hereafter the snow might whirl and the spruce trees bend and sway in the wind that wailed through their tops, but the white-tailed deer of the woods about Mount Olaf were always sure of a little hay to tide them over the month of hunger.

"Father," said the Boy, "I've made a birthday resolution. I am going to befriend every furred and feathered creature in these woods."

"All of them?" his Father asked. The Hired Man paused in the smoking of his traps to listen. "You aren't going to tell

us we can't do any more trapping this winter?"

"You can trap musk-rats," said the Boy thoughtfully. "And, of course, wolves, if any more should come. And weasels—the wicked creatures! They are only cruel, blood-thirsty ruffians who kill without need, just for the love of killing."

"What about Old Man Lynx?"

"Well, I know he is not popular. But, after all, he's a good mouser. And we must spare our mousers, the fox and the skunk and the big barn owl,—for the mice destroy our grain, and I don't know anything musk-rats are good for except their fur. I'm not quite sure about the wild cat, but he doesn't do *much* harm, does he, as long as there are fish to be caught? And he *is* a good mouser."

"What about bears?" asked the Hired Man, with one foot on the chopping block.

"Never do any great amount of harm," returned the Farmer. "They can catch mice with the best of them. Besides, they're mostly vegetarians. It isn't once in a coon's

age you'll find one of these black bears that would harm a baby, if you let him alone."

"The deer seem awfully afraid of bears."

"They have a lot more reason for being afraid of men," said the Farmer, eyeing the Hired Man's gun.

"And porcupines? What about porcupines?" asked the latter.

"They mind their own business," spoke up the Boy. "Let them live. You'll have plenty to do, hunting animals like wolverines and martins and mink and weasels. But don't any one hurt my friends!"

Thus Fleet Foot and her fawns were allowed to live happily on, as season followed season in the good green woods.

THE TRAVELS OF HONK-A-TONK

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THE TRAVELS OF HONK-A-TONK

I

THE FEATHERED AEROPLANE

All summer he had been preparing for the long journey to the Southland.

From the time he first chipped through the green-white shell, on their islet on Anticosti, and had made his first unsteady little flight into the sedgy shallows, he had been told of the migration in which he was to join or be left behind, when autumn chilled their little paradise of plenty.

He had grown like the weeds he lived on, till now he was as handsome a wild goose as could be found on the St. Lawrence,—was Honk-a-tonk, the gray gander.

Every day now the skies were cut by flying wedges that streamed across the sun, trum-

peting their mellow "Honk-honk, honk-a-tonk-a-tonk." The sound filled him with a wild unrest, a desire to be on the way,—just where he did not know, so long as it was on the Great Adventure.

Then one day it came,—the call to join ranks behind his mother, who, in her widowhood (his father had been captured by a fox), had decided to follow several of her neighbors who were now ready to go South.

It wasn't the easiest thing in the world for the young geese to get started in that V-shaped formation that would leave each member of the group an outlook unimpeded.

They had to begin their flight with a little jump into the air. As they mounted slowly above the swell of the ground air, where it was so hard to keep one's balance, they worked their wings with a screw-like action that formed figure eights as they struck the air. Downward and forward, then upward and forward, alternately, went their huge propellers, for all the world like those of an aeroplane.

(Indeed, are not the feathered folk the

Divine Pattern on which man has modeled his flying apparatus?)

It was easier going, higher up. The matter of balance and control having become a habit, at least in fair weather, Honk-a-tonk now had time to see how the earth looks from on high. Fields, farms and forests, rivers and roadways, and far off to the left, the ragged white line that divided sea and shore, lay spread beneath him.—Or rather, so fast was his flight that the scenery gave the illusion of racing toward him.

Then came a stiff air current, and for awhile he had all he could do to manage his body, wings and tail. Once he and those of his brothers and sisters who flew at the rear of the wedge were struck by an unexpected gust of wind that sent them off on a tail-spin, and it was just about all their lives were worth to recover their balance. After that Honk-a-tonk kept a weather eye out for aerial whirlpools.

Now they came to a smooth down current that required no more effort than coasting.

That rested their wings against the next emergency.

Next they came to a wide stretch of sandy beach on which the sun beat hotly, and the air was rising in an up-grade current that made it possible to soar into the cloudless blue.

They passed gulls sailing like kites above the cliffs, up whose sides rushed a continual draft. Then the chill of the ocean, and its aerial down-current, brought them coasting down so close to the shore line that Honk-a-tonk could see Mother Carey's Chickens gliding up and down, up and down, as they rose in the tiny drafts that rebound from the water along the swell of each successive wave.

Thus passed the first day. Sunset found the little flock volplaning in a long spiral glide to the surface of a tide-water pond, which seemed to rise sickeningly to meet them, till they struck with a muffled whirring of their great gray wings and a glittering splash.

Honk-a-tonk was ravenous, for he had been

traveling on high speed all afternoon. So were the neighbor flocks, which had kept close all day, calling merrily back and forth with their varied "K'wonks."

My, what quantities of pond weed, what bushels of wild rice, what salads of wild celery, what thousands upon thousands of grass roots and weed seeds they managed to consume, before the edge was taken off their appetites. Then how they bathed and prinked and gabbled, and curtesied to one another, and preened their feathers that all might be in ship shape for the morrow! But with the coming of the night, they dropped sound asleep standing up, and slept till nearly sunrise.

The next day they passed a flock of Black-polls, and flew side by side for a little way, exchanging greetings. The Black-polls explained that they had been nesting in Labrador, and were now heading South for a winter in Brazil. They would fly via Key West, Jamaica and the coast of South America. The gray geese marvelled that these tiny warblers would travel seven thousand miles.

"Why do you go so far?" asked Honk-a-tonk.

"Labrador freezes. No food—no food—snow and cold—snow and cold!" they answered him in a chorus. "Zwe-zwe-ee-ee-ee!"

"Then why don't you stay in the South?"

"Oh, but you don't know the Labrador summers!—Such feasting—such feasting—such feasting! Mosquitoes that thick you could eat your fill almost without stirring from the spot! It's the *only place* to bring up a family of children before they're old enough to fend for themselves." And they were off with their vigorous "Zwe-zwe-ee-ee-ee."

The next day the flock was struck by an early snow-squall, and only the sound of the breakers on the shore below, and the repeated calls of their leader, flying low, guided them through the maze of swirling white. They passed through that and were up among the warmer rain clouds, and Honk-a-tonk could see nothing down below save gray mists, while the clouds themselves

drove by like ships in a tempest. But by and by they had passed even these.

That night they camped on a river whose glint they had been following. They disposed themselves for sleep on the larger of the rocks jutting from the rapids, for only so would they feel safe, with the woods such a fine place for foxes.

They were just beginning their breakfast of wild rice when an orange breasted carrier pigeon, with tail as long as his body, landed beside them for a drink, flapping his wings to check the speed of his fall. On one leg he wore a silver anklet, bearing his number, while tied beneath his chin was a tiny message. The geese crowded curiously around him, for never before had they seen one of his species.

"Can't stop, can't stop," he cooed nervously. "I must get back home as fast as ever I can."

"Nonsense, what is your hurry?" urged Honk-a-tonk, who would have enjoyed questioning him further. But the pigeon was already speeding Westward.

"He must have something mighty important to attend to," thought the youthful gander.

That day the streaks of white they had seen at sunrise developed into icy winds that howled in the upper air, and the flocks called soundingly back and forth to one another, as they rode the bracing breeze. But by the morrow they had left the winds behind, and to their nostrils came the warm earth smells of the Southern state over which they were then traveling. Honk-a-tonk soon came to know the weather signs.

Sometimes they had to sleep in a patter of rain; but they minded not at all, so wonderfully did their oily feathers shed the drops. Sometimes they passed a flock of tame geese,—big, white, stupid fellows. How they jeered at them! And once the little gander on the end of the line just escaped a weasel.

They had a dreadful time getting by a swamp where hunters brought down two of their number. But for the most part, the trip passed happily enough.

Thus by easy stages, past plains and mountain peaks, they sailed the skies, till winter found them on the rich lagoons of the Gulf of Mexico, resting for the return flight in the spring.

II

BRANTA AND THE GOSLINGS

The Northward trip was even more delightful, because no mishap befell anyone at the hands of hunters.

Summer found the flock once more on their isle at Anticosti, where the younger generation spent long, blissful hours feasting and fattening, and racing one another in air and water.

It was not till their second trip to the South had been accomplished and the flocks (now the larger for last year's brood), had once more returned to the land of plenty, that something very wonderful happened to Honk-a-tonk.

That was the wooing and winning of Branta, the belle of all Anticosti (or so, at least, it seemed to Honk-a-tonk).

Canada geese are faithful lovers, and when once their little home in the reeds has

been established, it is a certainty that the happy pair will live out their allotted two score years and ten together,—if no ill befalls from fox or other enemy. Indeed, Branta assured him with many a caress of her sleek head against his feathered throat, that even should he die, never would she mate with any other, and his assurances were equally ardent, as he stood guard while she brooded the nest among the reeds.

June filled the grassy nest with seven of the most adorable bits of goslings that ever broke the shell. How proudly Branta led them into the shallows, where they followed without fear, while Honk-a-tonk paced back and forth to warn off all intruders. How cunningly they dipped and paddled, just like Mother! And how fast they grew up in the likeness of the great gray gander!

Honk-a-tonk's feathery chest swelled with pride as he watched the little fellows learning berry and leaf and bud, running awkwardly after their mother, gabbling, gabbling, gabbling their small affairs.

Later they began preparing for the long

migration that would try their wings that fall. They must be well drilled, because if they proved unfit to keep up with the flocks, they would have to be left behind. The weaklings—if such there proved to be—would never survive to hand on their defects to future generations.

Every day they must make a practice flight, singing to the rhythm of their wing strokes to keep in line. Now they tried a night flight, by the full of the moon—for one could never tell what emergency might arise. And now they must follow their leader through the fog. For Branta was taking no chances, so far as their schooling was concerned.

Usually they slept in the marsh on some reedy islet where no fox could find them. Once an otter, swimming out to them at sunset, drove them into a tree. And always they had to keep a weather eye out for hawks, diving deep and swimming with only their nostrils out, till the marauder had caught some other prey, and passed them by. But thanks to their unceasing vigilance,

"Honk-a-Tonk paced back and forth to warn off all intruders"

the summer passed, and still the goslings numbered seven.

Then came that wild clarion ringing down the air that meant the fall migration, and feathered voyagers swept across the autumn sky, sounding their sonorous honk, as the clans gathered over the hundred miles of Anticosti. From ponds, marshes, isles and tidal swamps, from shoals and inland streams, they mounted in long, swinging spirals, chanting till the heavens rang:

"We're off! We're off! We're off to the Southland, hurray, hurray!"

And racing past them came flocks of Arctic Terns, with their red bills and feet and their forked white tails, calling their brisk "Tee-arr, tee-arr!"

Came Golden Plover (black beneath), loons, and ducks of all degrees. Such a babel of bird voices—calling back and forth to keep their flocks together—never was heard before,—or so it seemed to Honk-a-tonk, his yellow eyes gleaming with rightful pride in his seven gray geese and Branta, as they formed for flight.

III

HONK-A-TONK AT THE VALLEY FARM

The Hired Man lay at full length behind a bush, gun in hand, and waited. Pecking contentedly enough at the end of her tether, one of the fat white geese from the Valley Farm cocked a weather eye at the heavens.

Suddenly a mellow "Honk, honk, honk-a-tonk-a-tonk" caused the Man to shift his position till his gun pointed straight at the clouds.

The Barnyard Goose, to whom the sound meant, "We're off to the Southland, we're off to the Southland," lifted his wings as if he would like to join the wedge that now streamed across the sky.

On they came, the long-necked wild geese, their bodies seeming like two lines of large gray dots arranged in the letter V.

"Honk, honk!" called the Barnyard Goose. "Wait for me, wait for me!"

The leader of the flock swept lower to see who this was with lifted wings and pleading voice. The fanning of the many wings now reached the ears of the Man behind the bush, and his finger tightened on the trigger.

"Oh, wait, I'm coming!" honked the Barnyard Goose, raising his fat body on unaccustomed wings. But the string about his leg brought him back to earth with a jerk.

Then "Crack!" went the gun, and the middle bird on the right-hand side of the V went circling out of line, flapping with one wing only, the other hanging useless. His flight became more and more erratic as he dropped behind the flock, finally turning him over and over in a series of aerial somersaults. A despairing honk told the leader of the flock that Honk-a-tonk was no longer in the running.

Slowly, slowly he settled to the ground, almost at the feet of the decoy.

"Hello, there!" the Barnyard Goose exclaimed, hurrying to greet him. "Awfully glad to see you!"

But Honk-a-tonk only wailed despairingly: "My wing's broken. I can't fly. They're going on without me."

"Cheer up! You're in the best barn-yard this side the North Woods," the Barnyard Goose assured him.

"But I want to go South," wept the wild goose. "I want to go on to Florida with Branta and my flock!"

"You're not going South—not this trip," spoke up the Hired Man, quite as if he had understood. The next minute the great handsome bird felt a wire noose thrown over his injured wing, and he was helpless.

Honk-a-tonk naturally thought he was going to be killed, as the Hired Man tucked him under his arm. And my, how his broken wing did hurt!

But fortunately the Boy from the Valley Farm came by at this moment.

"Give him here!" he commanded angrily. With understanding fingers he examined the aching wing, finally binding the broken bone by the aid of a handful of twigs and his pocket handkerchief,—while Honk-a-

tonk, who did not understand, hissed angrily.

"He'll let you go when your wing heals," the Barnyard Goose assured the newcomer. But that was not to be. No sooner had the Boy left the pair of them in the barnyard and turned his back to get in a few strokes at the wood-pile, than the Hired Man got a pair of shears and clipped the tips of the great gray wings till they could no longer lift their owner,—not till the feathers grew out again.

"Never mind," the Barnyard Goose encouraged. "It isn't half bad here."

But Honk-a-tonk only moped and mourned, as he saw one flock after another pass trumpeting overhead.

The flapping of their wings made him flap with his poor, useless one in his longing to be one of them.

"Now they are going to alight," he told the Barnyard Goose, as the dull red of the November sunset sent long dazzling rays across the meadows. For one of the passing flocks had begun slowly drifting closer to

earth and would likely alight a mile further on.

"Now they'll be settling on the lake to feed on eel grass and water lily roots," he continued lonesomely. "I can just imagine how merrily they are chattering."

"There is no lake down that way,— only grain fields," interrupted the Barnyard Goose.

"Well, then, they must be feeding on the scattered grains of wheat and hunting through the corn sheaves on the stubble field," he insisted. "Or maybe there's some of that delicious winter rye, as fresh and green as one finds in spring."

"But see what we've got here," urged the Barnyard Goose. "Come and get acquainted with *my* flock and see how snug and warm we are going to be all winter!" And he led the way to a little shed whence issued the sound of meal-time gossip. Honk-a-tonk observed that they were all white, like the one he had first met.

"Well, I can't say I like the turn events have taken, but here's for making the best

of things till I find a way of escape," he said to himself; and he approached politely, with many curtesies of his long black neck.

Would they greet him with angry hisses and perhaps fly at him and peck his eyes out?

Happily, the Barnyard Goose had paved the way for his coming, and they met him, not with hisses, but with a series of neck-bending curtesies like his own.

"It may be comfortable here in the barnyard, but it won't be the same," the wild goose told himself. "Branta may be searching hard for her supper, but I'd prefer plain sedge grass, if only I could join her, to the best table scraps ever set before me." And with a heavy heart he made his way after the Barnyard Goose who had first greeted him.

So long as his great gray wings had been clipped till all thought of those rapid miles of migration had to be postponed, it was certainly a piece of good luck to have landed in a place like this. For the geese of the backwoods farm had both food and shelter sup-

plied them in abundance. And soon he found his eyes closing, even against his will, as were those of his companions,—for the sun had set, and the night chill drew them close together.

Meantime what fate had he missed?

The flocks had swept on without him through skies of sullen gray, wind-swept and icy near the clouds, their wings beating rhythmically. Suddenly there was a hissing sound behind them, and one of the leaders, turning her head, caught sight of a flat-headed gos-hawk,—of all winged pirates the most powerful and the most bloodthirsty,—though so small in stature. The wind whistled through his feathers as he sped through the air behind them.

The younger geese at the end of the wedge crowded closer together, as if therein lay safety, while the older members of the flock flew with watchful eyes turned upward at their enemy.

As the gos-hawk reached a point directly above the hindermost gosling, his cruel flat head stretched downward and his talons

spread, ready for a clutch at the tender flesh, his cruel eyes gleaming red with blood thirst.

The great flock swept onward, the leader wary-eyed, though honking encouragement to those in the rear.

But now the gos-hawk, fierce and murderous, hung directly above the hindermost young goose. A moment more and he had gripped her outstretched neck with his talons, and, flap her wings as she might, she could not free herself from his clutch.

Then the full weight of the wounded bird began dragging the smaller gos-hawk down, despite the wildest flapping of his great, stiff wings. For he could not bear up her weight.

Should he let go his supper, or follow it down to the top of some tree and there eat his fill? Deciding on the latter course, he half-folded his huge wings and allowed himself to drop like a parachute, with the goose still fast in his talons.

They fell, with much flapping of their two pairs of wings, straight into the top of a spruce tree.

Just there the murderer had a surprise,

to understand which we must take a peek at Old Man Lynx.

That crafty freebooter, having left his cave some two hours before in search of a dinner, had just crept sniffing into a near-by spruce in search of Shadow Tail, the Red Squirrel, whose trail he had been following. But Shadow Tail had raced, squeaking with terror, to the tip of a branch so slender that it would not have upheld the giant cat for an instant. The little squirrel was secure, at least for the moment,—for had the lynx attempted to creep out upon his quivering victim, the spruce branch would have bent double with his weight, if it had not broken off.

The outlook was really far worse for the goose, whose Southward flight had been so harshly interrupted. For even had the goshawk's hold on her slender neck not all but killed her, no sooner had they alighted than Old Man Lynx began sniffing up at her warm, appetizing odor.

Now the lynx is not considered clever, as wild folk go. But with the odor of goose

mingled with that of gos-hawk, even before he could break through the tangle of boughs that blinded him, his nose told him exactly what was there.

He had just enough sense to know that he could not take his prize from the hawk without entering mortal combat with those great curved talons. If they did not scratch him bald and blind, they would inflict a worse injury, well he knew.

Yes, indeed, Old Man Lynx knew better than to attempt to steal a gos-hawk's prey away from him. He knew the only way to get his goose was first to get the hawk. But even so,—why not?

Honk-a-tonk was a heavy sleeper, else would his dreams have been disturbed, first by the gos-hawk's death agony, then by the unhappy squawk of a fellow member of the flocks on Anticosti, who was not so fortunate as to have landed in a backwoods barnyard with a broken wing.

The winter passed,—not so badly save for that homesick feeling that kept him longing for the spring, and the returning flocks. He

met Lop Ear, the spotted hound, and Krek, the pheasant cock,—who did not migrate,—and Shirr Chipmunk, and Shadow Tail, the Red Squirrel, and Chick-a-dee, and Frisky, the Red Fox Pup,—who peered longingly o'nights through a crack in the poultry pen, and licked his chops, and trotted away again.

And the prisoner told brave tales of his fellow migrants—and the Barnyard Goose cackled unbelievingly as he described the world's champion flight of the red footed Arctic Tern, who nests at the North Pole's brief summer of two months of unceasing sunshine, then journeys eleven thousand miles to the Antarctic continent for a four months' stay,—where again it has twenty-four hours of daylight.

He told of the Golden Plover, who in a single flight—without pause for food or rest—makes twenty four hundred miles at one stage of its flight, taking the short cut—the over-water route—from Nova Scotia to South America—though should he fall, he could not swim.

And he told of storms that test the har-

diest, and of the instinct that points the way, born of the experience—not of themselves but of their ancestors, and as much a part of their heredity as the color of their wings.

In return, he learned the little lives of the furred and feathered folk about the Valley Farm (for each had his story).

Then one glorious day in early April, Honk-a-tonk, his wing healed and his yellow eye scanning each returning flock that streamed across the sky, suddenly cocked his head on first one side, then another. It was Branta's voice, calling, calling, calling to the mate she mourned.

With one mighty effort, he raised the great gray wings that had by now grown out again (and had, by the Boy's command, been left unclipped), and leapt into the air. Downward and forward, upward and forward, in figure eights his long unpractised wings pressed back the air, as he balanced, every faculty in full control. His muscles were stiff from long disuse, but Branta—recognizing his agonizing call—sent the flock circling around and around till he had

joined them; and they were off together to the isles of Anticosti.

And the heavens rang with their joyous, "Honk-a-tonk, honk-a-tonk, honk-a-tonk-a-tonk!"

THE ADVENTURES OF SHIRR CHIPMUNK

"Hey! Look out there, Cousin Chip," barked Shadow Tail, the Red Squirrel, as down the Old Logging Road he saw a man kneeling with a long stick.

The man, as Shadow Tail well knew, was the Hired Man at the Valley Farm, and the black stick spoke thunder.

"Look out Shirr," he called again, "he's looking straight at you!"

"Aw, he can't see so far," laughed Shirr Chipmunk. He whisked out of sight just the same, and none too soon, for a heart's beat later a shot rang out on the still autumn air, and something heavy zipped past the very rock on which the little fellow had been sitting.

"Say, but that was a close shave!" squeaked Shadow Tail from his hole in the hollow oak. "I declare no one is safe any

more. I've a good notion to move, and then they'll be sorry, when there's no one to plant nuts for them any more."

"Huh! you think you count for a lot in this world," scoffed Shirr, from a crevice between two stones.

"Well, all of us together count a heap, let me tell you," barked Shadow Tail.

Shirr turned to more important matters. Truth to tell, he was worried. It would certainly never do to continue living there, now that the Hired Man had found him out, for his bright eyes had seen much, and he knew that there would be no peace till he had brought Lop Ear, the Spotted Hound, and made an end of him.

"I just wish I were his size, and he were as little as me," he chirped angrily. "I'd chase him then and see how much fun he'd get out of it!"

However, this did not solve the problem of the immediate future. He had intended passing the winter here, where he had been so cozy all summer. It had been particularly handy, because he could emerge from his

doorway in the shelter of the rocks, and take a good look about for enemies, before showing himself in the open.

"A great time of year to have to move," he complained as he peered this way and that through the aisles of trees in the effort to decide where to go. "Every good location in these woods will be snapped up by this time, and I'll just simply have to move into any hole I can find that no one else has any use for. I can't stay here, that's sure, or that Hound will be digging me out in no time."

The little chipmunk had a hallway ten times his own length there under ground, but he knew how Lop Ear could dig, and he knew he would never rest easy in the little cave at the end of the hallway, when he might find himself being dug out at any moment.

"One thing that was awfully foolish," he grumbled on to himself, "was to dig only one entry-way. The next place I'll make at least two, so that if he begins at my front door, I can slip out the back way. And that

reminds me, I'd better get my excavating done in a hurry, or the ground will freeze before I've half finished my winter quarters, and then whatever will become of me?"

Shirr Chipmunk chattered angrily to himself.

Now that the Hired Man from the Valley Farm had found his hiding place, the hound would surely be set to digging him out. To move was absolutely necessary.

And yet he had built so carefully, here under the boulder on the hill-top! He had stored enough supplies in his snug cellar to last him all winter. And besides he was getting dreadfully sleepy. Cold weather would soon be upon him, and he had little enough inclination for starting a new home.

He started out none the less, to find a new site. Already the oak leaves were turning brown and falling in a thick carpet through the forest aisles. The grass was yellow and soggy from recent rains, and the air damp and depressing. A pale sun shone at intervals, retiring after each half-hearted performance behind a sulky cloud. And the sky

hung gray save for a mere patch here and there.

"A great time of year to be turned out of house and home," grumbled the little fellow.

To the west of his hill lay an open meadow, and beyond that the Valley Farm. To the south lay the hill on which Frisky Fox had his home. To the east was nothing but swamp, clear down to Pollywog Pond. And that would never, never do for tunnel building.

To the north, beyond the Old Logging Road, stretched a wide brule where the forest fire had swept the spring before. Now it was all young blueberry shrub. Oaks, chestnuts and beeches had been so crippled by the flame, that it had taken all their strength to heal their wounds, hence there would be no nuts, and it was most essential to have a food supply close by. There was always danger in going too far from home, to say nothing of the labor involved in carrying his stores from a distance. Where then should he go? On beyond lay unknown dangers, and it was getting dusk. Shirr was

tired and cold and hungry. Perhaps it would be best after all to take a chance in his old home.

Thus it was that just as the setting sun was burning its way through the clouds for the last brief moment, Shirr dragged his weary little striped body back to his cave under the boulder.

"Oh, Shirr! look out!" suddenly screamed Jimmy Crow, who seemed to keep track of everything that went on in the woods. "The Hound is coming!"

Shirr crept to the top of the boulder for a quick survey. There, sure enough, running along just ahead of the Hired Man, came Lop Ear, and what to do Shirr didn't know. His little furry chest fairly quivered with the pounding of his heart, over which he clasped one paw as his round black eyes gazed at the horror that was bearing down on him. The nearest tree was just too far away. His mother had warned him against choosing such a location, but he had felt so sure of his own ability to keep a weather eye out!

"Shirr-r-r-r-r! Shirr-r-r-r-r!" he squealed, passing the warning on to his neighbors. And "Shirr-r-r-r-r!" they all took up the cry, till every one of his neighbors was under cover.

Until this moment the Hound had shown some doubt as to which way to go, but now he made straight for the little chipmunk.

Shirr Chipmunk had brought trouble on his own young head. For until he had uttered his shrill cry the Hound had not known which of several trails he was supposed to follow.

By way of making a bad matter worse, the little fellow now darted out of his burrow in a wild thought of escape, then seeing nowhere else to go, he flashed back into this burrow again. If only he had taken his mother's advice, and dug a second entryway.

Now Shirr is rather a striking looking chap, with his red-brown coat, and the black and white stripes down his sides. And with all this darting in and out, the Hired Man

finally saw him, and pointed him out to the Hound.

Shirr's teeth chattered with terror as he saw Lop Ear racing toward him. Then he quite lost his head, and instead of lying low and trusting to luck, he dashed frantically across the open meadow, and into the first hole he saw, a hole scarcely an inch wide, that seemed to lead down under a rock.

This hole, as it happened, was the winter home of Writho, the Black Snake. And if it hadn't been that the chill had sent Writho to sleep, it would have been all up with Shirr. As it was, Writho came to his senses just in time to feel the little chipmunk's departing tail tickling his nose. With a hiss of wrath, he started in pursuit. But meeting Lop Ear before he had wriggled half way out, he backed in again hastily.

Shirr, meantime, had made a flying leap, and was half way up the old apple tree and scolding for all he was worth. For Lop Ear could bay himself frantic, but he could never reach that high.

Just then a little pattering sound began rustling the few dead leaves that still clung to the naked branches. It was the first big drops of an approaching storm. In another moment it began to pour in sheets. The Hired Man suddenly remembered that he had left the hay barn open, and calling the Hound, he strode off home as fast as his hob-nailed boots would carry him.

But Shirr only clung shivering to his tree trunk, till the heavy down-pour had drenched his furs and set his teeth to chattering in another manner. Assuredly, this was no way to spend the night. So, taking his courage in both paws, he whisked back to his boulder, there to await what the morrow might bring forth.

With the first streak of clearing weather, Shirr once more explored the blueberry burn with a view to a new building site. Racing on till he reached Lone Lake, he found a sunny slope covered with beech woods. And beech nuts, as everyone knows, are particularly handy for a chipmunk to carry. He can stow any number of the three-sided little

things in his pockets, which reach in great folds of loose skin from his cheeks to his shoulders.

But his troubles were not over, it seemed. For who should come trotting along that way in search of adventure but Frisk, the Red Fox Pup! And no sooner did his keen black nose cross the trail of the little squirrel, than he started in pursuit.

Shirr scampered for all he was worth, till he found a crevice between two stones. And into this he flattened himself.

Life certainly had been thrilling for Shirr Chipmunk.

First to be chased by the Hound, then to have the Fox Pup after him! But in his crevice in the rocks he was quite beyond reach of those sharp white teeth, and the Fox Pup soon got tired of waiting for him to come out.

Shirr, impatient at the delay, heaved a sigh of relief when the sight of a brown bunny nibbling peacefully told him that the fox must be quite gone.

Here in the beech woods he was going to

have an even better home than before. For the forest floor was strewn with nuts. All he had to do was to make his tunnel, and there would be no further cause for worry. For with his huge cheek pockets he could carry his winter stores to his burrow in no time.

First he would have to use those same pockets to cart out the dirt. The little fellow set to work vigorously. Today there was a cheery bit of sunshine. Tomorrow it might rain. Ah! He had it! The very spot. On the edge of a tiny clearing grew a patch of juniper. With his tunnel entrance underneath the bushes he could emerge and take a survey without the risk of being seen till he had satisfied himself no enemies were near.

Besides, what fox would try to dig him out, when it meant getting his fine coat scratched by these sharp green needles that protected the berries?

Shirr began operations by digging a tiny hole with his handlike little paws, and carrying away the dirt thus removed in his cheek pockets. For he believed in hiding every

sign of his whereabouts from those who might like him for supper.

And just for fear he might leave the scent of his feet too strong and tell-tale around his doorway, he left each time in a different direction, and always with great flying leaps.

Trying the entrance finally with his head, which was as wide as any part of his body, he began to pack the dirt in hard and firm, waiting till he was at least his own length underground before widening his hallway. For in that narrow entry-way lay his defense.

Pausing by and by a little distance away to comb the dirt from his whiskers and wash his face for luncheon, he was startled by the sudden silence in the woodland. Where but a moment before birds had been chirping overhead, now there was not a sound to betray their whereabouts. It meant trouble of some kind, but what? Shirr peered curiously this way and that. There, like a great black shadow directly above his head, hung Cooper Hawk, with eyes that glittered down at him, and talons spread for

the snatch that would carry his prey into the air for a banquet.

This time Shirr felt sure his end had come! For in that instant the great bird gave a piercing scream, then dropped in a swift spiral. His legs rather than his wits determined him to make one desperate effort to stay on the good green earth, and he was racing like a streak of lightning back to his hole.

But no, he had attempted too much, for already he could feel the wind of those great four-foot wings. His striped sides quivered with the thought of the piercing death that must overtake him, and he had to open his mouth to draw a breath, and he uttered one agonized "Chirr-r-r-r-r!"

With the hawk's talons fairly tickling his fur, Shirr Chipmunk suddenly felt himself going down, down, down, as the ground beneath his feet gave way. In fact, he fairly slid into an underground cavern. He was safe from Cooper Hawk, but whose home had he thus unceremoniously entered?

It might have been a skunk's hole, for all

he knew, and he would be no better off than he was before. But it meant one chance in a million, of escape, and Shirr took the chance.

Sliding straight down for what seemed a great distance to the little squirrel, he came up suddenly with all four feet thrust into someone's deep, warm fur!

As it happened, he had landed in the burrow of a sleepy old wood-chuck who was as cross as he was tired. And this invasion of his nap by such a frantic, quivering little person, with his sharp claws all out, awoke him in a temper.

"What in the name of all that is annoying are you doing here?" squeaked the old chuck furiously. "Get off my back this instant! It's lucky for you I happen to be a vegetarian."

"Oh, please don't drive me out!" begged Shirr. "Let me stay just two minutes more."

"Out with you, or I'll help you out," insisted the old chuck, emphasizing his remarks with a nip on the flank.

Sometimes in moments of peril, one's

"Shirr Chipmunk is attacked by Cooper Hawk"

mind covers leagues of ground in a twinkling. In the brief minute it took the old chuck to drive him forth from his haven, Shirr Chipmunk thought of several things.

He thought of the huge hawk awaiting him outside, a monster with claws hanging ready to clutch the little fellow and tear him into bits as he flew back into the sky. And then he thought of the new home he was digging under the juniper bush, and the snug hole under the boulder whence the Hound had driven him forth. Was there no safety anywhere?

He really felt so sure that Cooper would be there to snatch him the instant he thrust his striped head above-ground that he could hardly believe his eyes when he saw the bird's great, speckled breast and four foot wings soaring away after easier quarry. It seemed too good to be true!

But his nerves were shaken, and he felt the need of food and rest before he could work further on his tunnel. It occurred to him to slip back to the old home under the boulder for the night.

The autumn sun, which but a moment before had been gleaming through a forest all reds and yellows, and the dark velvet of evergreens, now slipped behind a cloud, and dusk descended on the piny air. This made the going a trifle easier, and Shirr skipped along from tree to tree, around the blueberry burn, and down the Old Logging Road in no time. Darting across the familiar pasture in which his home had been, he slipped down the long hallway that led to his store-room, where for months he had worked harvesting acorns and ground-nuts and wild crabs. But what was that peculiar crunching sound? Someone was there before him, someone who was making free with his winter stores.

"How dare you?" barked the tired adventurer wrathfully.

The fact that the intruder was Cousin Shadow Tail made little difference to Shirr Chipmunk.

"Stealing my winter stores!" he chirped in exasperation.

"Why, where is all the big noise coming

from?" shrilled the Red Squirrel impudently.

"You great, big, thieving rascal, you!" barked Shirr, tail jerking angrily. "I declare, it is too bad of you! It isn't as if you didn't have a fine big store-room of your own, if you'd only take the trouble to fill it. Here I've toiled and slaved for months trying to get fixed for winter, and you come and help yourself the minute my back is turned. You get right out of here, or I'll bite your nose!" And Shirr danced up to him with open jaws.

"Dear me, what a lot of noise we can make," laughed Shadow Tail. "Be careful or you'll strain your voice. So you'll bite me, will you? Ha, ha! Why, I could take two of you in one mouthful. But I wouldn't like the taste. It would be too hot." But he backed away just the same. "I hope you feel better by the time you've slept over it."

And that, indeed, was true. Shirr had forgotten the quarrel by the morning, and called the cheeriest kind of greeting as he sped back to his beech wood. And my, how

he did work! By noon he had a tunnel sunk three feet below ground. With quite a nice cave rounded out at the bottom. Then a chill wind warned him that another storm was coming, and he left his last few loads of dirt just outside his doorway in a most tell-tale fashion.

The next thing he knew, the light was suddenly cut off, and his nose caught a strange breath sniffing down at him. Then he saw two great shining eyes! It was a weasel, with nose thrust squarely into the hole.

Now he was a prisoner, and he had no supplies in his cellar yet. Why, he might starve! If only he had tunneled a second entryway! Then he might be able to slip out the back door while the foe waited at the front. Such a delay, too, with winter coming on so fast and all this work to be done!

His main entrance was just the width of his head now, and the edges had been patted down so hard and firm that the next frost would make them as solid as iron. He could just squeeze his lithe body through.

A little inside his tunnel broadened till he

could turn around with comfort, and on beyond was a storage room, that, when full, would last the sleepy winter through. Beyond that was to be his nest, soft-lined with autumn leaves, and beyond that still, his rear hallway, his emergency exit, whose door would open away over, under another boulder.

Then a new thought struck him. Why not go right on with his work while the enemy waited? He had braved a variety of perils in the past two days, and he had survived every one. The only trouble was that now he could not carry the excavated dirt away; he would have to pat it down into his tunnel walls. Well, that was better than sitting there worrying. And Shirr set to work with a vengeance.

The weasel thrust at the narrow entrance with his pointed nose, his mouth watering for the tit-bit within. But to no avail. And by and by the sounds within ceased entirely. Could it be that Shirr had dug a second entryway and escaped? With a disgusted snarl the weasel slunk away, and began

circling about to find Shirr's back door. But there was none to be found, and at last he gave it up and went away.

And Shirr? Why, the little chipmunk had simply given way to that drowsy feeling and taken a nap.

THE BIRDS' CAFETERIA

"Hello, there!" cried Chickadee, a little gray fellow with a black cap, who sat on a twig of the wild apple tree. "Tsic-adee, dee-dee-dee-dee!"

"Hello, yourself," shouted Pecker, a downy black and white bird with a red patch on the nape of his neck. "I'm going to be your next door neighbor this winter."

"How jolly!" chirped the first comer, swinging head downward, like a circus performer. The little hooks in his claws made it easy for him to cling to the under side of the limb.

"Yes," said Pecker, "it's a bit too drafty down in my nest in the Old Apple Orchard. Besides, it's too near Barnyard Tom. That cat will be the death of me yet! . . . The way he prowls around all night! My, but it does give one an uncanny feeling to wake sud-

denly and see his green eyes peering in one's front door!"

"My, I should think so!" agreed Chickadee.

"So now I'm going to chisel a new home in the south side of this beech,—and you may be sure I shall make it deep enough to escape the drafts." And Pecker forthwith began such a tattoo on the aged bark that the chips fairly flew.

"I'm awfully glad we're going to be neighbors," said Chickadee, fluffing out his feathers to protect him against the chill of the November afternoon. "Because now Robin Red Breast and Betty Bluebird and so many of my friends have gone South, there will be just you and me and Junco of our own crowd left, to hold the fort. By the way, I guess I'm in one of your old houses now."

"Yes," said Pecker, "but you're more than welcome. I love to build, and each year I flatter myself I do a little better than the time before. When do you suppose Junco will get here?"

"I rather expected him with that first little flurry of snow."

"Well, it really looks as if we'd have snow before morning," prophesied Pecker, between pecks. "And it's coming from the North, so I expect Junco is fleeing before it this very minute. I shouldn't be at all surprised if we'd eat breakfast with him yet.... And that reminds me, I simply must get this hole enlarged a little faster, or . . ."

"Sh!" said Chickadee. Pecker turned. Down the Old Logging Road, with the sun setting red at their backs, came the Boy from the Valley Farm and his father.

"He's the same Boy that used to feed us in the Orchard last winter," said Pecker. "I'm not afraid of him. Wonder what he's carrying?"

The Boy, dressed in a red plaid Mackinaw, had a long peeled pole across one shoulder, while the Farmer carried a box and a hatchet.

Peering this way and that through the naked branches till they found an open space, the two now laid the pole on the

ground and nailed the box to one end. Then they dug a hole with the blade of the ax and set the pole upright, the boy holding it in position while his father drove stakes all around to hold it firm.

They next nailed a couple of sheets of tin (cut from old two-quart tomato cans), in the form of a sloping shelf around the pole, as high as they could reach.

"Wonder what that's for?" chirped the little gray bird, but Pecker could not answer.

The Boy and his father waited till a gust of wind came up, then nodded smilingly as the box veered around the top of the pole till the open side faced away from the wind. Then they went back the way they had come, only to reappear a little later with another pole which they carried still further into the woods. Chickadee watched, his black velvet cap just visible, as he clung head downward. When they were quite out of sight, he began exploring the queer box. There was a sloping roof that would shed the rain, and a floor that extended clear out on the open side like a porch.

"It's much too big for a bird-house," said Pecker, coming over to inspect. "I wonder why they've set it all by itself, so far from any tree. And what in the world do you suppose that tin shelf is for? It slopes down, so no one could possibly get a foot-hold. There is something mighty mysterious about this thing!"

It was well for Pecker that he finished his hole that afternoon. For next morning they woke to a world of white. Not only was the ground covered, but the feathery swirl from the sky had loaded every branch and twig with frosting, and one could hardly see for the white mist that filled the air.

"Chip-churr, chip-churr! I say, there," called a clear voice from the ground below.

Chickadee poked his head forth and peered intently at what at first appeared to be a big brown leaf drifting about. It drifted to the top of a sapling, and Chickadee flew down to have a look.

"Why, it's Junco, as I live!" he exclaimed. "How are you, Stranger?"

"Fine!" declared the plump newcomer.

He was leaf brown on top. Underneath he had white feathers to match the snow, and white sides to his tail. His bill, too, was white.

"I declare," called Pecker, thrusting his head just out of his hole, "you always look so like the bark of a tree from above that I can scarcely tell you are there!"

"Neither can Cooper Hawk," laughed Junco.

"Welcome to our winter colony!"

"It's a summer colony to me," chirped Junco. "If you want to know what winter is, just migrate up to the Arctic Circle. . . . But there's fine eating there all summer," and he began hungrily boring into an oak gall for the little worm inside. "But tell me, what have you up there?" nodding toward the box on the pole.

"Search me!" said Chickadee, setting to work to look for grubs on the under side of a limb, while Pecker began marching up and down the snowy tree-trunk with head cocked to hear the gnawing of insects under the bark.

All day the white flakes fell feather-like. That night it turned still colder, and the snow froze into an icy crust. And when the sun rose again, every tiny branchlet gleamed like silver.

"My, how cold my feet are!" shivered Chickadee, as he poked his little black head from his hole.

"Are you there, Pecker?" calling across to the beech tree. "I'm glad to see your red muffler. Didn't know but that I might find you frozen stiff." For the tiny black and white bird, with stiff tail braced against the trunk, was already trying to peck a hole through the ice.

"Slim pickings it will be today," he grumbled. "Might as well freeze as starve."

"That's right," agreed Junco gloomily.

All forenoon they tried to peck through the ice to their food. And their little stomachs began to feel dreadfully empty. "I wonder how long we could live without eating," Chickadee wondered faintly, as noon passed and there were still no signs of thaw.

Then there was a crunching sound down

the Old Logging Road (Junco began pretending that he was just a brown leaf flecked with snow). It was the Boy from the Valley Farm again. This time he carried a long, slender stick, with just a tiny box on top of it. Coming to a stand-still directly underneath the pole house, he raised his stick till the end reached the platform of the little porch, then he emptied the box with a sudden jerk of the stick and passed on.

Chickadee peered after him bright eyed, then flew to see what it was all about. The next moment he set up a joyous call. "Come here, fellows, tsic-a-dee, dee-dee-dee-dee!" he sang joyously, "it's a regular feast!"

Pecker and Junco lost no time in accepting the invitation, and all fell to hungrily. For there were chopped raw peanuts, cheap raisins and suet, and all sorts of table scraps, with even a little sunflower seed. "It's a regular cafeteria," said Junco. "We'll each help ourselves to what we like best."

But the words were hardly out of his bill before a slim white form, for all the world like a snake, with its evil flat head,—except

that it wore fur,—began to climb the adjoining pine tree. . . . It was Slim the Weasel, of all the wood folk the most dreaded. Chickadee, Pecker and Junco were so busy feasting that they did not even see him.

Slim's little red eyes gleamed hungrily, for he was fond of birds. But unfortunately for himself, the Boy had set the pole in a clearing, and the nearest branch was still too far away for him to venture a leap.

Disgusted, he dropped to the ground, and started climbing the pole, only to come plump against the slanting shelf of tin. The shelf was just too wide for him to climb, and too high for him to leap. Again and again he tried, but to no avail, and he finally gave it up and went away.

"Why, *that's* what the little tin shelf is for," marvelled Chickadee. "That Boy's our friend! Tsic-a-dee, tsic-a-dee, dee-dee-dee-dee-dee!"

Now Chickadee was not the only winter's refugee to whom the Boy was kind.

To Mother Grouse Hen and her chicks, the

long, hard winter had been one of suffering and peril.

First had come the deep, dry, drifting snow, and the bitter cold and wind. That had not been so bad except for the difficulty of getting out for food. For the chicks, now well grown, and plump and sleek from the autumn's berrying, had all snuggled down into a drift together (where the warmth of their breathing had hollowed out a cave for them). There the drift had hidden them alike from frost and fox and hawk.

It was really quite comfortable there at first, in the heart of the drift, as they huddled together for mutual warmth. For the snow was full of oxygen, and they got all the air they needed.

But after about three days of this, their hunger began to draw painfully at their empty crops. And they fared forth, braving the biting cold, on the chance of finding a few cedar and juniper berries. It had been scant pickings, I can tell you, with even the junipers buried in snow and a wind that made flying a gamble for feathered folk.

They would lift their wings and make a brave start for a cedar tree, perhaps—and land, instead, on an oak, whose bare branches offered nothing they could eat.

But all that had not been half as bad as the privations that had come when, with a thaw and a freeze, the crust had hardened into a glittering shell over every drift.

Then, indeed, had their stanch hearts all but failed within them. Blinded, suffocated, they ploughed this way and that through their white prison. Finally, though, they pecked a way through the icy crust. It had taken their combined efforts, working on one part after another, before they had found a thin place where they could peck clear through.

Once released, there had been the problem of finding food. For they were weak from fasting, one or two of the chicks being hardly able to lift their wings from sheer starvation.

Even when they had found juniper berries up-thrust on their prickly branches above the snow, there had been a crust of ice to

peck through, before even one frozen berry could be swallowed. Then one day something happened.

"Crunch, crunch, crunch!" came someone's footsteps.

Could it be Jake, the Hired Man with the black stick that spit fire and death, Mother Grouse Hen asked herself, as she and her little family beat the air to the heart of a spruce tree.

From between the green-black foliage, drooping with thick snow, she watched with yellow eyes that blinked nervously.

Down the Old Logging Road came a lad of fourteen or thereabouts, his great round cruiser snowshoes making footprints oddly out of proportion to his size.

His red muffler made a bright spot in the landscape that could have been seen anywhere against the surrounding whiteness. So also did his red checked Mackinaw blanket coat. His feet were encased in furry moose-hire larrigans that reached half way to his knees. And from his lips issued a cheery whistle that cut the stillness of the

wood-land like a ray of light thrown suddenly into the dark.

What the boy did next will always be a matter of wonder to Mother Grouse Hen,—one of those things that seem too good to be true,—although he repeated the performance often enough during the weeks that followed. (Indeed, without his interest in the tragic little lives of the feathered folk, there would have been many a tiny pile of fleshless feathers and frozen bones before returning spring brought relief and plenty to the forest folk.)

Thrusting his mittened hand deep into his coat pocket, the Boy first scattered a handful of crumbs from his mother's bread-box over the frozen snow. Then he climbed a spruce tree and tied a great, creamy strip of suet high in its swaying top. Finally, he fished into another pocket and strewed grain, the sweepings of the mangers, before the amazed little family,—and their joy was complete.

FRISKY, THE RED FOX PUP

"Children," said Mrs. Red Squirrel, one day when the smell of wet earth, steaming in the April sunshine, mingled with the trilling of the robins in the Old Apple Orchard. "You will have to learn to climb now, there are no two ways about it!

"You are positively too heavy for me to lug around in my mouth any longer." And she ordered them every one out of the nest.

The truth of the matter was that she was worried about Father Red Fox, whose bright eyes had spied out her hiding-place that morning as he was returning home with a grouse hen for his family.

If the children fell out of the tree, he would surely nab them.

The two larger babies promptly followed along after their mother. But mouselike little Shadow Tail could only drive his claws

into the bark and cling, while he stared in a daze at the surprising world that lay all about him.

There was the pasture, over which he had been able to gaze from their hollow oak. Beyond it lay the Valley Farm, with its barn and orchard, and the fresh-turned furrows of the cornfield. Mother Red Squirrel had chosen a site where she could watch all that came from ever and ever so far away.

On the other side of the Old Stone Wall was the woods, a maze of brown trunks and green-black evergreens, with just a misty lacework where the branches were budding out. The pink flowers of the blueberry bushes that carpeted the ground beneath added one more color to the maze.

"This way! See how I balance with my tail!" his Mother urged him. But Shadow Tail only trembled, as he crept slowly after her. When, finally, he came to a little branch on which he could rest, he gave one look at the ground—so far below,—then crouched, afraid to move, his sharp little claws dug deep into the bark.

A sudden puff of wind shook his branch till he thought surely he would fall. Then a leaf blew across his eyes, and everything whirled dizzily around him.

"Come!" commanded Mother Red Squirrel. But Shadow Tail only blinked his beady eyes and scolded in his funny treble chirp. Finally she came back and licked his nose comfortingly with her warm tongue. But the little fellow just simply sat up on his hind legs and put his paws about her neck, till she had to take him in her mouth and carry him.

"Easy game!" thought Frisky, the Red Fox Pup, watching from behind a boulder.

The next day Shadow Tail was up with the sun; and he felt much spunkier than he had the night before, as people always do when they rise with the sun. But then, of course, he didn't know how Frisky Fox was watching all his movements!

In fact, as he thought of the way he had made his mother carry him along the last smooth limb, he was really quite ashamed of his lack of courage. And again he disobeyed

—which is about the most dangerous thing a squirrel baby can possibly do.

He could see an empty bird's nest on the limb below, and he wanted to find out what it was like.

Slipping softly out of the hole that made their doorway he sallied forth along the smooth limb that had seemed so impossible to climb the night before.

Suddenly his fragile claws slipped over the smooth bark, he scrambled madly for a moment trying to keep his foothold, and down he went.

Now there were a lot of things that Shadow Tail had never learned. One of these things was that squirrels do not fall to the ground, as nuts do when you drop them out of a tree. They just sail through the air like birds about to alight, for their broad tails buoy them up just enough to ease their descent.

The squirrel baby was no exception. So gently did he drop from the smooth little branch he was on that he managed to thrust a claw into the branch just beneath, and

there he hung for a moment trembling, his eyes shut, wondering if he were about to be dashed to pieces on the ground below.

As he realized that nothing of the sort were likely to happen, he felt a rush of returning courage that just enabled him to draw himself up again—and there, right beside him on the limb, was the bird's nest he had set out to find.

This nest, though a little wabbly, he found upon investigation to be just the right size for him to curl up in, with his plumy tail spread across his back to keep off the wind.

Then, quite by accident, he overbalanced the old nest, and though he himself escaped by leaping back to the branch, the nest, in falling, hit someone down below full on the tip of his sensitive nose.

It was Frisky, the Red Fox Pup, who had been sitting there beneath a bush watching all that went on. He let out an angry yip.

"I'll get *you* for that, you saucy thing, you!" he challenged in his high young voice.

The Red Fox family had been having

"I'll get you for that," said Frisky Fox

troubles of its own, as Frisky's Mother could have testified.

If Father Red Fox had been there at the time, it would certainly have been his place to head off that impudent hound, Lop Ear, when he came so near to finding the five red puppies.

But he was chasing grouse hens over on the other side of the ridge this morning, and there was no one to do it but the little mother. True, if anything happened to her, the pups would starve, because they had never learned to eat anything but milk. On the other hand, if Lop Ear got them, there wouldn't be any puppies to feed.

So, gnashing her teeth to keep her courage up, Mother Red Fox ran straight back into the ravine, barking to make the hound look around before he should come too near.

Of course, all Lop Ear could think of now was how he would like to set his teeth in the insulting little creature who had dared to challenge him. So off he darted, yelping furiously, the little mother not twenty paces

ahead, her red brush streaming straight out behind to help her keep her balance.

But that did not last long. She was really much lighter on her feet than the spotted hound; and besides, she knew these woods like a book. So it wasn't much more than a shake of a rabbit's tail till she was clear out of sight. But he was following, because his keen nose told him everywhere her musky feet had been; and if she ever wanted to get back to the babies waiting so hungrily on the hill-top, she would have to throw him off the scent.

She had been racing alongside Rapid River, which she had crossed away up on the mountain-side where it was a shallow brook. But now they were in the bottom lands, where it had widened, and she hated to plunge in and swim, if there were any other way to get back on her own side of the water.

Quick as a flash an idea came to her. Just around the bend she could hear the falls roaring and churning as they tumbled into a swirling pool. Taking particular care to leave her footprints plain in the soft clay of

the river bank, where Lop Ear could not miss finding them, she picked out a log that didn't look as if it could bear even her light weight unless she tiptoed across ever and ever so softly. Right there she made her crossing, leaping the last six feet clean over the ugly pool that frothed and whirled in a hollow of the ledge.

Sure enough—she watched it all from the top of a neighboring ridge—along came that clumsy hound, blundering straight across the rotten log with his nose to the footprints she had left for him! And just as surely—Mother Red Fox fairly laughed out of her little black eyes, to think how her ruse had worked—the minute he got back to midstream, the old log suddenly gave way beneath him and he went sliding into the whirlpool.

Around and around he whirled, just able to keep his nose above water by paddling his hardest, but quite helpless when it came to getting a foothold on the slippery sides of the basin. Lop Ear was certainly getting the worst of it!

Mother Red Fox would have been glad enough if Lop Ear had drowned in the whirlpool. Because just so long as he was at large, the five fox babies would never be quite safe from his jaws.

But she didn't really think he could drown, because he swam so well. And even if he didn't get out right away, he would slide over the edge of the basin after a time and come off with no more than a drenching.

Still, she watched from behind a bush on the ridge, till she saw that that was just what did happen. At least, he was ready to call it a day, and slink away home without giving her any more trouble.

Meantime she must get back to the red-brown pups as fast as ever she could. And that was pretty fast, you may believe, when she began to wonder if anything had happened to them during her absence. What if Slim the Weasel had got a sneaking feeling that there might be something good to eat on her hilltop?

So, taking as roundabout a way as she

could, just in case Lop Ear had not had his ardor altogether cooled, she let no grass grow under her feet until she had once more tiptoed down to the old den under the hilltop, where five hungry voices rended her mother's heart.

With a quick lick on each of the inquiring little noses, she stretched out beside them for a moment's rest. But there wasn't going to be any peace in the Red Fox family until it had found a new den. There was a nice one, she remembered, over on the opposite ridge, that she and Father Red Fox had come near deciding on last fall when they had first set up housekeeping. True, it was rather drafty, but now winter was over that would be no drawback. The thing that counted was that it was safe. No hound, to her knowledge, had ever come within baying distance of it, and no one, to look at the narrow crack through which one entered, would dream that it led straight to a fox family's home.

This new den, as she remembered it, was about three feet under ground, and through

it led a tunnel with two openings. One opening, far back on the hilltop, had a pile of dirt heaped up about it, but this was not the real door.

It was just their make-believe door. It was all banked up on the inside so that no one, like Slim the Weasel, could possibly get in that way. The real door was just that crack in the rocks, where the ferns would soon grow high about it.

Taking the biggest of the clumsy youngsters by the scruff of the neck, she, therefore, slung him back across one shoulder just as she would a hen, and trotted off to the new home, where she left him away back in the darkest corner with the stern command to lie still as he valued his safety.

By the time she got back to the waiting four, she found Father Red Fox anxiously counting noses. Having crossed the trail of the hound, he needed no argument to be persuaded of the value of the change, and he, too, seized a pup, and even led the way with all the air of being the one who had really decided the matter. One more trip and the

little family was comfortably settled on Lone Ridge. (At least, things were comfortably settled so far as the Red Fox family was concerned.)

There was some one in a neighboring tree, however, who held a different view of the matter, and that was Mother Red Squirrel.

When Mother Red Fox brought in a trout from Rapid River, or a frog from Pollywog Pond, the young foxes always sat around the prisoner in a fat row, their ears cocked as if they knew all about it and their pudgy paws making sleights at the creature as it flopped about on the rocks before the den.

But beyond a young field mouse that hardly made a mouthful for a pup like him, Frisky Fox had thus far never brought in anything larger than a beetle for himself. Not that he had ever wanted more than the sport of chasing something—thanks to the ample diet provided by Mother Red Fox, who had begun to supplant his milk with food more suited to his new little needle-like white teeth.

But from the moment Shadow Tail had

knocked the old nest off of the limb and it had struck Frisky, it became the one great longing of his foxy heart to catch that saucy squirrel. He therefore kept a close watch on all that went on in the Red Squirrel family from that day forward.

He could see the youngsters playing tag every day, so confident had even Shadow Tail become as he gained skill in climbing, and Frisky used to sit on the very top boulder of the ledge that marked his den and watch them chasing-beetles playing hide and seek.

Shadow Tail he thought rather set on his own way; and Frisky had learned from his own mother how dangerous it is to disobey. He was, therefore, not surprised when one day the squirrel baby did something that was very wrong.

Shadow Tail, having coaxed in vain to be taken down to the ground, where he could see a handsome red mushroom growing quite close to their tree trunk, waited till his mother was busy stripping off a bit of bark underneath which she could hear a fat grub

boring. Then, quick as a wink, and with never a look about him for possible danger, he scurried down to the ground, and across to that red mushroom.

He was just nibbling a bit off the side and spitting it out again because it tasted peppery, when he thought he heard a rustle behind him.

He cocked his head to listen, but the sound had ceased, and he began nibbling again. But just behind a little clump of bushes, a red-brown form the size of a two months' puppy was creeping forward inch by inch, as stealthily as a cat stalks a bird.

A second time there came a sound, no more than the crackling of a leaf stem. This time it made the fur along his spine begin to rise. Something must be wrong—but what?

THE TRIALS OF SHADOW TAIL

Decidedly there was something wrong, else Shadow Tail, the disobedient squirrel baby, would never have had that prickly feeling along his spine.

For, crouching catlike behind a bush, young Frisky Fox was gayly making ready for a spring.

He'd show Mother Red Fox that he could catch something larger than a shrew mouse!

Had the wind not been blowing the other way, Shadow Tail would have known there was trouble brewing in the rear—though squirrels don't place half the dependence on their noses that they do on their "toeses."

But the wind was not in the right direction—as Frisky Fox well knew, when he chose to approach from that angle—and Shadow Tail was just beginning to tell himself there was nothing in it, when—with a

rush and a spring—young Frisky made a leap!

At the same instant Mother Red Squirrel, far up in the tree above, gave a shriek of warning, and her cry so startled the squirrel baby that he jumped at least three feet.

"Climb—climb for your life!" cried Mother Red Squirrel, barking her way down to him in great bounds, and altogether making such a racket that young Frisky Fox stopped short to see what it was all about.

"Climb!" shivered Mother Red Squirrel. Her teeth chattered with fright and her tail jerked up and down in her excitement as she dropped to the ground and whisked across to the neighboring pine so close to the pup that he all but got a mouthful of her tail!

My! How he scrambled up that tree trunk! He never stopped till he was higher than Frisky Fox could jump if he tried all day.

"I'll get you yet," barked the disappointed little fox, hopping up and down in the vain hope of getting just a nip at him.

"You will not!" chirped Mother Red

Squirrel's young hopeful, now that he was safe. "Not till you learn to be more spry than that!"

But his heart still beat hard in his furry little chest, and in his secret soul he was not so sure about it after all.

Now this was not Shadow Tail's first adventure. He had not had to wait for the Fox family to move into the den beneath the oak tree. It had happened in this way:

Away down below, at the Valley Farm, at the end of the wood road, there was a Little Girl. No one of the Forest Folk minded the Little Girl, she moved so softly—though they used to view her red hair ribbon with a good deal of interest, peering at her, bright-eyed, from all sorts of hiding places that she never even guessed.

Something called her to the woods this particular afternoon. The warm April sunshine and the sounds of birds and squirrels combined to make her feel exactly as if she would like to fling her strap of school books clear to the woodshed roof. But, being a girl, she didn't.

Instead, she laid it on the kitchen table, took one peek into the empty cooky jar, then went racing down the lane and across the corn field, leaping in glad bounds from furrow to furrow, till she reached the edge of the woods.

She hadn't seen the least sign of violets yet, though there were round checkerberry leaves that came near fooling her. So she wandered on, till she spied the old oak with its low-hanging branches which were so easy to climb.

The minute her feet began scraping along the bark there was great excitement in the nest in the hole in the trunk. As it happened, Mother Red Squirrel was away, leaving the babies quite alone. And Father Red Squirrel, like all squirrel fathers, had gone off to the club as soon as the babies came.

Of course, Mother Red Squirrel never would have left them, even to get her dinner, had she not first made them promise faithfully not to move or squeak till she got back. If only they had all obeyed her, things would have gone all right. But no sooner had the

Little Girl found a seat on a limb than she heard a tiny squeaking right beside her ear!

Peering cautiously into the opening, she thrust in her hand until it encountered something warm and furry.

Shadow Tail's little heart began thumping up and down, up and down so hard that it seemed as if it must burst with fright in just another minute.

Too late Shadow Tail realized that his mother had been right.

For, if he hadn't squeaked, the Little Girl never would have known he was there. Of course, he could not imagine what it could be that would make so much noise climbing into the old oak. But then woods babies don't have to know what it is all about. All they have to do is to mind their mothers, and they will generally come out all right.

Of course, too, the Little Girl never would have heard such a wee, high-pitched squeaking if she hadn't been sitting so very still, with her head right beside the hole, because human beings don't have nearly such sharp ears as the wood folk.

As it was, all she had to do to find him out was to twist her head around facing the hole, and she could peer straight into its dusky depths.

When her cautious hand had found something warm and furry, she closed her fingers around the topmost of the wriggling bodies, and drew it forth, and there in the palm of her hand lay Shadow Tail.

A tiny mouse-like creature she found him, with a long, willowy tail that just promised the plumy breadth of his mother's.

And because she was so happy at finding the cunning fellow, she never once thought how his poor heart was thumping, up and down, and up and down, till he could hardly draw his breath. She was not a cruel girl,—she had nothing but the kindest feeling for Shadow Tail,—but that was something he had no way of knowing. He expected to be eaten alive in just another minute.

Again, she never thought how worried Mother Red Squirrel would be if she took him home with her. All she could think of was how perfectly jolly it would be to have

him for a pet. So cuddling him warmly into her two hands, she raced back to the farm with him as fast as ever her short legs could carry her.

Arrived at the big farm kitchen, which was still deserted save for Fluff, the Maltese kitten, who had slipped in with her when she opened the door, she laid Shadow Tail on the clean-scrubbed kitchen table, where his weak young legs sprawled to all four points of the compass.

She now set some milk before him in a tiny dish. But, of course, the squirrel baby had no more idea of what that was for than an unweaned kitten. When she gently tried to make him taste it, he felt sure it was something very, very dangerous, and he backed away from it till he nearly backed off the edge of the table.

Feeling that he must be taught to eat or he would starve, the Girl brought him back to the milk dish. But by now he was so frightened that he resisted till he overturned the dish and drenched himself with milk.

He was certainly not enjoying his visit as much as the Girl had hoped!

To cap the climax, Fluff, who had been watching everything from the window-sill, suddenly began tip-toeing across the table.

No, Shadow Tail was not enjoying his visit!

And now Fluff must come sneaking up to pounce on him! He was so wet from his unexpected milk bath that his tail no longer fluffed,—it hung limp and spiritless, with the wet fur clinging; and what with being so tiny and so mouselike anyway, it is no wonder that Fluff considered it her duty to catch him.

The squirrel baby was not so young but that he knew the look in her yellow eyes! He felt the end had really come!

The next instant the Little Girl took him in her hand to wipe his fur dry. Quick as a flash he saw a way out of his difficulties. For there before him a long dark tunnel stretched away to no telling where! As an actual fact, the tunnel was the brown sleeve of the Little Girl's frock. But Shadow Tail,

gaining courage with the hope of escape, went scrambling straight up inside.

At this the Little Girl gave a shriek, for his tiny claws scratched her arm, and she didn't know but that he might bite. So she wriggled and squirmed about till she had reached up and coaxed him to let go.

As she once more held him in her hand she suddenly noticed how his heart was beating, and she realized how very, very unhappy he must be. And because she was really a kind-hearted Little Girl, she decided to take him back to his mother at once.

First arming herself with a peace offering of goodies from the pantry, she raced back with him as fast as ever she had come. And it was not till she had gently laid him in the nest in the hollow oak that she stopped having that sorry feeling inside.

Meantime, where was Mother Red Squirrel? She had been having a bad time of it herself, you may be sure, or she never would have left the nest so long unguarded.

As it happened, no sooner had Father Red Fox dropped the last fat pup into the new

den than he started out to see what tit-bit he could find for supper. The very first tit-bit he spied was Mother Red Squirrel, who had just climbed into a pine tree, with a view to investigating the crow's nest that swayed in its top. A crow's egg wouldn't be bad eating after having had her hands so full with the three babies! But no sooner had she started up the trunk than she saw Father Red Fox sitting beneath, just waiting for her to come down!

Not that Mother Red Squirrel was going to allow herself to be treed by a fox! No, indeed!

But the unfortunate part of it was that she had chosen a tree that stood by itself in the woods, so that it didn't look possible to reach a branch of any neighboring tree by even the longest leap.

Needless to say she had given up all thought of the crow's egg, for this time at least, because any attempt on her part to climb to the great scraggly nest in the top of the pine would have brought about her ears a storm of protest, had the crows caught her

in the act, and she would just simply have had to race back to the ground to escape their beaks, no matter how many foxes were waiting there.

Now, the nearest tree, a maple sapling, was still so far away that it would be taking a desperate chance to try to leap to its branches.

The tantalizing part of it was that, once in the maple, it would be an easy matter to go all the rest of the way home by running from branch to branch through the woods, because all the trees between the maple and home were so close together that their branches fairly interlaced.

She started to bark to keep her courage up, seizing this opportunity to hurl all the hard words she could think of at the old fox, licking his chops down below.

And so great was her excitement that she quivered from her nose to her tail, the vehemence of her bark lifting her clear off her feet, just as a dog's bark so often lifts him into the air, muzzle first.

Of course there was no one in all the woods

so skillful as the squirrel family at making flying leaps, their broad tails helping them to parachute from one branch to another. But in this case she could never make it, she felt sure. It was just a question of which was better for the mother of a family of helpless babes, to try the leap and fail or to stay there while her babies starved.

She took her stand on the topmost branch of her pine tree on the side towards the sapling, hoping against hope that something wholly unexpected would happen. Perhaps some creature larger than the fox would come and scare him off! Perhaps he would see easier game somewhere else!

Finally the unexpected did happen. A little breeze sprang up! It wasn't much of a breeze at first, but after a few minutes it was swaying the maple sapling right straight towards her tree. Seizing the very instant when the two branches came the closest, she made her leap, and landed, clinging safely, to the smaller tree.

Now when Mother had reached the nest in the hollow oak, she nosed eagerly over her

sleeping babies to see if all was as it should be. But when she came to Shadow Tail, all sticky from the milk he had fallen into, and all over his fur the terrifying human scent of the Little Girl's hands, she quickly had the story of his adventure in the farm kitchen.

So she gave him a bath, holding him in her two arms, for all the world like a human mother, licking his fuzzy orange fur till it shone, and combing his tail with her claws.

A SQUIRREL'S PARADISE

Summer passed, and Shadow Tail began thriftily filling his cellar for winter. (That is, thriftily for a Red Squirrel youngster.—He was not half so industrious as his cousin, Shirr Chipmunk.)

Then one day the Hired Man found his stores, nuts it had taken him all the autumn to gather—and began climbing to their hiding place with a bag to carry them away in. Shadow Tail was desperate. Without a moment's hesitation, he made a dash for the opening that served him for a doorway. Once inside, he took up his position a good distance below on his little hoard of nuts. And there he waited!

The Hired Man reached a foothold from which he could thrust his arm into the hole. Down he thrust his greedy hand till just the

tips of his fingers touched the little fellow's stores.

The next instant a darting pain ran through the Man's forefinger. Shadow Tail's long front teeth met through the flesh with a click, and his jaws clamped, for he did not mean to let go.

The Hired Man gave a yell, and tried to withdraw his hand, but the little squirrel clung furiously and, bracing all four legs against the rim of his hole, refused to let the hand be withdrawn.

The thief said things that Shadow Tail could not understand, though the tone was menacing.

But with the memory of all the long days he had toiled Shadow Tail had no intention of showing mercy to a creature so many, many times larger than himself. "So, you would rob us and leave us to starve?" gurgled the little squirrel through set teeth.

Then the Hired Man jerked his hand through the opening, despite all his tiny opponent could do. But Shadow Tail still hung on, his jaws set fiercely, and the claws

of his agile hind feet scratching at the Hired Man's wrist.

Suddenly the little fellow received a stinging blow on his head. Then all was darkness. What happened next he did not know. It was Jim Crow who followed overhead as the Hired Man went running back to the Valley Farm, the squirrel still clinging with jaws clamped to the swelling finger, though his eyes were closed in a faint.

Then the Boy met them, and pried the little fighter's jaws apart, and bathed the Hired Man's injured hand, while Shadow Tail lay limp at their feet.

"Wake up, wake up, Shadow Tail! The Hired Man will kill you, sure, now," Jimmy cawed helplessly from a tree-top overhead. But the little fighter never moved.

Had Shadow Tail's fate depended on the Hired Man alone there would certainly be one less squirrel to gather nuts in the North Woods.

For his attack on the hand that would have robbed him he would assuredly have been thrown to the cat as he lay there,

stunned and dizzy, at their feet. But the Boy from the Valley Farm had come in the nick of time.

He now picked up the little fellow and stroked him softly, cuddling him into the warm pocket of his coat and starting back to the house with him.

When Shadow Tail opened his eyes he stared about him dizzily. For surely he had never seen such a wonderful place as this human storehouse the Boy called an attic. Though he was still frightened, because the Boy was watching, and one never trusted these human creatures, he saw at a glance it was a squirrel's paradise.

Ranged along one wall were barrels and barrels of nuts—hazel nuts that one could carry away in one's cheek! And there were more chestnuts than he could eat in a winter, as well as harder shelled kinds.

Nor was this all. There were apples along another wall—barrels and barrels of blushing Baldwins, perfumed Pound Sweets and juicy Greenings—and there were other kinds, much more fragrant smelling than

the puckery wild apples he knew. His mouth watered, and he watched the boy out of the corners of his beady eyes to see if he were going to be left alone.

Nor were nuts and apples all that filled his heart with wonder. Here were great strings of seed corn hanging to dry from the rafters. And there were dried bean vines, and ripening tomatoes hanging by their roots.

How he longed for the Boy to go and leave him to sample them. Now, the Boy would not have cared if he had. In fact, he had brought Shadow Tail to this very spot, hoping to give him a treat. But how could the little squirrel know that? Had not one human creature robbed and all but killed him?

Perhaps the Boy guessed the way he felt about it, because presently he climbed back down the ladder and pulled the trap-door shut. Shadow Tail was left alone.

He blinked for a moment in a long ray of sunshine that crept through the dusty window and along the floor. Then he gathered courage and scuttled to the nearest barrel.

My, how he feasted! He paused in fright every time the wind whistled or the old floor creaked. But wasn't he happy!

When he had eaten till his eyes stuck out, he set to work to harvest some of the good things. There was a crevice underneath the window-sill. And one never knew when the hour of need might come.

But eating did not make up all of a squirrel's life. There are things he loves even better than food. He is not happy without his freedom to roam the woods with his kind. And Shadow Tail quickly realized that he could never be happy as a prisoner even here.

No, a squirrel could not be happy in even such a paradise. He wanted his freedom, even if it meant cold and hunger. He scrambled to the dusty window-sill, shining in the last rays of the setting sun, and pressed his nose to the pane that shut him in. And his eyes were wistful as he gazed toward the woods beyond. It would have melted the Boy's heart had he seen.

Indeed, he had never intended to keep

Shadow Tail a prisoner. But of course the squirrel could not know that, as his experience with the Hired Man had robbed him of his faith in human kind. He was angry still as he thought how that great creature, so many times his size, would have robbed his winter's store. And the thought made him more eager to get back to his home in the hollow oak. So Shadow Tail set his bright eyes to work to see if there were not at least a knothole through which he might escape.

By and by the Boy came up again, but Shadow Tail only scuttled down into a barrel of hazel nuts till all but his face was buried, and there watched, bright-eyed, while the Boy coaxed.

"Come here, and I'll take you back to the woods," the Boy urged. But the squirrel did not understand, and though this time the Boy left the hatch to the ladder open, Shadow Tail had not the slightest intention of venturing out that way. For below lay unknown regions—and besides his sharp

ears had heard the sound of the hound's bark and the cat's hungry mew.

Neither could his bright eyes discover the slightest opening in the attic walls.

A third time the Boy visited the attic. This time he must have understood, for he found the little squirrel with nose pressed flat against the glass.

"Well, then, if that's the way you want to go, you shall," laughed the Boy. "Aren't you even going to say good-by?" But Shadow Tail had waited for no second invitation. He had leaped to an old apple tree below, and was scrambling down its trunk, and across the barnyard, before the Boy could even get his head out the window to look.

KREK THE PHEASANT COCK

1. *The Orphan*

It was one of those breezy days in June when the sun peeps through creamy billows of wind cloud that proved his day of fate.

Other young birds were learning to fly, and the fields were fragrant with pink sweet clover. The upper meadow was dotted white with daisies, and violet and yellow with vetch and buttercups. Plovers called musically, and a flock of blackbirds whirled and curveted like drilling troops till they found a treetrop to their liking. Trim-tailed barn swallows darted back and forth in search of food for their young.

In the orchard beyond the Valley Farm the Hired Man was plowing. The wood stretched green and shadowy from Mt. Olaf, while to the West the hills rose blue in the distance above the checkered farmlands. The meadow grass, knee high, was

peopled with a myriad of crickets, and bumble bees droned over the clover.

It was a day for feeling the joy of just being alive.

The Boy from the Valley Farm was crossing the Upper Pasture when he stopped to pick wild strawberries. Now it happened that Madame Pheasant had also been visiting the wild strawberry patch,—she and the one surviving chick of the little brood of twelve she had so proudly hatched the month before.

For in the little rocky glen that cut the pasture just beyond the strawberry bed there lived a cat-like black and white striped fellow, malodorous of reputation and very fond of chicken.

Here, in the fastness of the stone pit,—roofed over as it was with saplings and protected by a barbed wire entanglement of blackberry vines, he could dart out on any chick that strayed too near, and even Madame Pheasant be scarce the wiser for it.

To her, home was a patch of staghorn sumac. For, once her chicks were tucked

away beneath the vines of her own little rock-pit, it would be a warier hunter than the skunk,—and one less fond of keeping his fur intact,—who would venture a race for them there.

Little did the Boy imagine how near were the two pairs of bright, beady eyes that watched him gobbling up their berries, till with a sudden backward move, he all but sat on both hen and chick.

Madame Pheasant, with a startled cry, flew straight for the blackberry vines, while the lone chick half ran through the grass to the sumac patch. The Boy thus found himself between mother and chick. The hen fluttered and squawked in her effort to distract his attention, but only succeeded in waking the skunk. She was never seen from that hour.

Grabbing his big straw hat like a butterfly net, the Boy leapt after the chick. An instant more and he held cupped between his two hands a little cock pheasant scarce as broad as his palm, and as handsome in his

neat brown and white wings as anything you can imagine.

"Krek—Krek!" remarked the orphan hoarsely, and struggled free. And the Boy let him go.

Then came long, free days in the tall meadow grass, when Krek wandered beneath sunny skies, catching here a grasshopper and there a doodle-bug, or staying his thirst with berries. Even the thunder showers he loved.

With eyes on the cool green depths of the woods that stretched to meet the pasture, he used to try his wings, uttering a creaky call just as he so often heard those long-tailed fellows, the grown cock pheasants, uttering theirs, as they rose with a rush of wings from their coverts.

2. *Bunkies*

Then came a man with a mowing machine, who drove him from one stronghold to another.

The summer passed. The abundant food had made him into a fine, well-grown young fellow. The woods had become a glory of

scarlet and old gold and purpling grapes, and a sumac thicket blazing with the crimson torches of its ripening seed pods!

For awhile Krek feasted on the grape-vine that clambered over the sumacs and the stillness of the hazy afternoons wrapped him about with a great peace. Every here and there a sound like his own harsh "kre-e-ek" would grate forth with the sudden whirr of wings that marked another stalker of the forest aisles taking to flight. There was one young fellow in particular who came to feed at the grape-vine, who interested him,—a young cock slightly smaller than himself, but with the most amazing knowledge of the woods,—doubtless due to his mother's training. Krek followed when he left for an open patch where there were bugs and butterflies to put a finish to their feast.

Krek's comrade was an orphan too, now, but he noticed that most of the young pheasants still ran with their mothers, though the fathers held to the bachelor ways that obtained for all save during a brief period each year.

As the red and gold gave place to dead brown leaves that drifted in clouds over the forest floor, and the sunshine cooled before it left the graying sky, Krek and his bunky found that they could sleep more comfortably o' nights by huddling five or six young cocks together in some sheltered hollow.

The young hens also bunked together now, while the older hens sought shelter two by two, and the older cocks nested in pairs in the crevices of the rocks where the leaves drifted comfortably into the cracks.

Krek had his favorite shelters here and there in the woods, the best being the hollow that had been burned out of the base of a tree. Here the warmth of their bodies was penned in, while the hill cut off the winds that came down from the North. Sometimes the snow drifted clear over their heads in the night, but the warmth of their breathing melted a little air space so that they did not suffocate.

It was thus easier to keep warm when the snow was deep, though harder to find food. But there were always skunk cabbages down

in the swamps,—unfragrant, it is true, but filled with delicious little seed balls, cottony inside and shaped like toy pineapples. These were filled with half a dozen to a dozen seeds or nuts as brown and good as so many tiny hazel nuts.

As the spring sunshine melted the last white patches in the soggy glens, and the pink-white Mayflowers thrust fragrantly through the brown of the fallen leaves, a strange exhilaration filled him, and Krek noticed that the older cocks would get on a stump and boastingly call "ka-ka-ka-ku-ka," keeping up this performance all day long, instead of hunting for food. First one would flap his wings and call, then he would peer all about, and perhaps make a circuit of the nearby underbrush, then fly to the stump again and utter his challenge. And Krek wondered much.

A few weeks later, wandering over the south side of a hilltop that overlooked the brook, he came plump upon a gray-brown form that sat movelessly beneath a seedling pine, where she could keep a weather eye on

all that passed below her. Krek went on down to the brook to drink. When presently he retraced his steps to the open ridge where the grasshoppers were most plentiful, he passed the spot where she had sat, and to his amazement found in the hollow of the leaves twelve tiny grayish olive eggs. None but a pheasant's eyes would have seen them at all, so perfectly did they blend with the green shadow that overhung them,—just as none but a bird's sharp eyes could have seen the gray-brown hen as she sat there as still as a little mound of leaves.

3. *The Call of Spring*

But Krek did not at this time connect the calling of the cock pheasant on the stump with the pretty home beneath the seedling pines. Nor did he, later, think of the olive tinted eggs when he came upon the mites of down that followed the hen, scratching for little bugs the way she scratched for big ones, or raising their weenty wings in little darts at passing butterflies, cheeping their soft "t'seep, t'seep, t'seep."

No, Krek was quite without comprehension of these things until his second spring. Then, suddenly, he too felt a longing to fly to the top of some stump and call. For his heart was swelling within him with a strange unrest, half joy, half longing, for he knew not what. That he had become a handsome bird he was well aware. And he strutted up and down every fallen log he came to in the warming sunshine, preening his feathers and sounding his harsh song.

Then, one day, he spied a trim little brown hen pheasant watching him from behind a clump of jack-in-the-pulpits that here edged the swamp. And such a pretty bright-eyed creature he had never seen in all his life before. For in her eyes there sparkled—yes—a distinct admiration for his own splendid person. He stood forth boldly in the morning sunshine, preening his plumage with the pride that was his due, and watching out of the corner of his eye to see if she was taking it all in.

She was! His heart beat faster, and his veins raced with a strange new ecstasy. For

this day had destiny called him! He knew now why the first signs of spring had set him to singing the joy of life.

She was coquettish, though. For every time he approached, she ran away and hid. His interest deepened. Wasn't she a little flirt, though! (The demure brown thing!)

But Krek, it would seem, was not her only admirer. For the next moment he found himself the center of a vortex, the rim of which seemed to be composed of spurs that cut into his sides and wings that flapped about his head. To his surprise he recognized his buddy of the winter-time, now apparently bent on his destruction.

"You leave her alone," the newcomer creaked at him, ruffling his feathers and jumping up and down in his rage.

An even hotter fury took possession of Krek. Still slightly heavier than his foe, though less alert, he flew at this trespasser on his budding romance, thrusting at him with his own sharp spurs. Being of lighter build, the newcomer toppled over backwards, then took to the branch overhead and waited

"Ruffling his feathers and jumping up and down in his rage"

for a chance to drop on his antagonist from above. And because Krek was new to the game, he was taken by surprise by this counter move, and it was only by dint of sheer unwillingness to give in that he finally held the field. But by that time Brownie, the little hen, was gone!

4. *The Courtship*

The next day, however, she came again. But once more a former bunky disputed his claim on her, and again he fought.

And so on for weeks! It was enough to make one frantic, and he stalked about in a perpetual rage. There was but one consolation,—always Brownie's bright eyes watched from some leafy covert,—watched victory after glorious victory,—though she always ran away when the fight was over.

Truth to tell, Brownie was the queen of the roost that year, the very finest of the younger brood of hens, and desired of every gay Lothario from Mount Olaf to Rapid River. Krek meant to be king.

Ah, but that was not so easy! One there

was who had vanquished all comers,—one Hot Spur, a three-year-old of the most amazing agility and courage, and one who accordingly had things all his own way in the woods.

That Brownie secretly preferred himself, Krek had no doubt in his heart of hearts. But it was most annoying to note her willingness to witness Hot Spur's triumphs with apparently the same degree of interest she showed in his own. Doubtless her mother had instilled into her youthful mind the wisdom of picking the husband who could afford her the best protection from the perils of the forest. But that Hot Spur would offer her but a half-hearted devotion Krek well knew, from the philanderings he had seen the latter engage in with other hens.

The spring days melted away, and so anxious had Krek become for fear Brownie should finally yield to the charms of the conquering Hot Spur, and so filled became his feathery breast with rage at that same conqueror, that Krek actually could not eat. He went about in a sort of fever, darting

angrily at every cock that crossed his path, —waiting, waiting, waiting!

Then one day it came,—the chance for which he had been preparing! And while Brownie lined up with three others of her ilk to watch, Krek and his foe drew spurs to see which of the two was hereafter to rule the woods, which was to have his pick of the pretty brown hens waiting bright-eyed to laud the victor, and which was hereafter to lead the younger flock.

Now, Krek had the advantage of a slightly heavier body, for his early abundance of good food had given him a head start that he was never to outgrow. Hot Spur, on the other hand, was a more experienced bird and one who had had two seasons of battle to season his wits.

For some time it was nip and tuck between them. Each gave as good as he got, and each got all he could stand. Their cries sounded harshly, and their feathers flew, as they dug at one another's sides with their spurs, trying always for the head. By all the rules of the game, Krek would have been floored in

the seventh round, if mere hurt were the only test.

But back of all the pain, back of all the bewilderment of the whirlwind attack, his heart swelled with the pent-up longings which now made him aware that Brownie of the admiring eyes waited to crown the victor with her favor.

Then, so suddenly that it left him clawing madly in the air, his antagonist had had enough, and ran bleeding into the hiding of the tall fern fronds.

Krek was king of pheasantdom!

This time Brownie did not run away, but called him with coquettish backward glances to go berrying with her while they considered nesting sites.

THE END

SNOOKS — THE BEAR CUB

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CHAPTER I

The Baby Bear

Ethan woke to find big snow-flakes tickling across his face. His cot was just inside an open window and a white drift was piling on the sill. Yet the big calendar on the wall said "March 7." The boy and his brother slept in the office because the only other room of the forest ranger station was the kitchen.

He could hear his brother shaking the grate, and a smell of frying bacon told him breakfast was nearly ready. He'd forgotten the wood-box again! *Oo!* How cold the floor was, as he banged the window down and pulled on his clothing. Here in the White Mountains it was still chilly in May, and Ethan was used to the steam heat of a city apartment. But out in the big kitchen a fire

snapped in the cook-stove and the heat billowed out from the oven door.

"Well, Ethan, I was going to eat everything up without you," his brother teased. He drew a smoking pot of baked beans from the oven.

"Better not, Captain! I'm hungry as a bear." The eleven year old brother divided the crisp slice of pork that lay on top, then ladled out the juicy brown beans, while the grown up brother stacked a plate with yellow squares of corn-bread. The tea-kettle hummed and steamed as they ate.

"Well, partner, how do you like my cooking?" demanded the Ranger Captain. This business of housekeeping was something neither boy knew much about.

"Tastes like some more." Ethan scooped up a second helping of beans, while his brother poured himself a cup of coffee. To Ethan's mind the Captain could do anything he set out to do. When the Captain had been sent to the Pine Ridge Ranger Station, Ethan begged to come with him, just till school opened next fall, and the family had

decided it would be good for both of them. It would give Ethan a chance to learn a lot and fatten up a bit, his brother had promised.

The Captain's work was to take care of the Pine Ridge section of the forest, protecting the trees and the woods dwellers in fur and feathers, besides making trails and bridges for summer campers, seeing that hunters and fishermen had licenses, and various other matters.

This morning the Captain, glancing out of the window, suddenly frowned, and his lean face looked so stern that Ethan peered over his shoulder. Away off through the whirling flakes, they could see two men tramping with guns through the drifts.

"No shooting allowed!" The Captain shrugged into his green Ranger coat with the silver badge inside the lapel, buckled his pistol belt around his hips and started after them. Kicking the door shut behind him, he crunched across the snowy porch in two long strides.

Ethan watched him make for the woods

behind the barn, while the alarm-clock on the lamp-shelf ticked louder and louder. The fire stopped crackling, and the boy thrust in several sticks of wood from the box behind the stove. His rubber boots stood ready, but he had promised to do a page of arithmetic the first thing every morning. Now he could no longer see the two huntsmen.

Startlingly, away off somewhere, came the report of one of their rifles, then another. *Jing!* What was it?

Ethan, peering through the snow-splashed window pane, could see that the Captain had broken into a run after the men. They must have shot something, thought the boy. He hoped it wasn't one of the deer that came so timidly to the haystack when they were hungry. If it was—! Ethan was so furious that he wanted to fight. He must find out what had happened.

He yanked on cap, boots and mackinaw, turned up the red plaid collar and started on the run. The snow was knee deep where winter drifts had failed to melt. Stretching from one of his brother's big foot-prints to

the next, the boy hopped along as fast as he could. The trail led on and on, uphill into the pine woods, straight toward the cave between two boulders that they called the Bear's Cave. There, the Captain said, a bear must be having her winter's sleep, because her warm breath came through the snow in a yellow stain.

Ethan could hear his brother's angry voice, even before he came upon the men. Their guns were still smoking, and the biting smell of gunpowder hung on the clean air. At their feet lay a great furry black bear that they had dragged from the cave. Ethan knew that they had killed the bear, and it was against the law, when they had been given no hunting licenses.

The Captain was speaking. "You are both under arrest! Give me those guns!" He started marching the two men before him with his pistol pointed at their backs. Ethan stood staring after them. His brother must be taking them in town to jail. "Back later," he told Ethan.

"Wa-a-a-ah!" Ethan heard a high-pitched

wail, almost like that of a human baby. It came from the far end of the cave. The sound was pitiful. It must be a baby bear. The big bear must have been its mother. He hesitated. He would like to see the cub, yet it looked dark inside the cave. Since Ethan had had his eleventh birthday, he knew he ought not to mind the dark, but this was his first time alone in the woods.

The cub wailed again. My, but it would make a cute pet! Ethan crawled into the cave on hands and knees. It smelled of warm fur, and in spite of himself Ethan's heart thumped against his side. Quick, where was the cub? There was a tiny dark object in the far corner. Could it bite, he wondered? Well, he'd have to take a chance. Groping forward with one hand, he found a ball of warm fur. It squealed, but it could retreat no further. Grabbing it with both hands, Ethan hung on while the creature tried to wriggle free. Almost afraid the mother bear might somehow come to life again, he backed out of the cave with the whining cub. Then he ran. The cub shivered, and he snuggled

it inside his coat. It was no bigger than a fat house cat. Its claws dug into Ethan's flannel shirt. It couldn't be very old, he decided, as he made for the cabin. It was the tiniest bear he had ever seen. Its pointed pink mouth was nearly toothless and the soles of its tiny hind feet were shaped like a human baby's. Again it whined.

"There, there!" the boy stroked its fat back, which was fuzzy like a puppy's. "What you crying for?" When he reached the kitchen, he set the little animal on the floor. The cub promptly ran under the stove, clear beyond arm's reach.

How could he coax it out? The boy called, but the little bear would not come. Perhaps it was hungry. Ethan opened a can of condensed milk, which was all the milk they had up here in the woods, mixed the thick stuff with hot water, and poured it into a saucer. "Drink it!" he urged, shoving the dish under the edge of the stove. Then he watched. In a few minutes the little bear's nose came sniffing toward the warm liquid, and Ethan quickly shoved it in.

"*Snook!—Snook!*" choked the cub.

"Here! It's good!" Ethan dipped a finger into the milk. The cub licked it eagerly.

"I know!" Ethan ran in to his brother's desk, where lay a new fountain pen with an ink dropper that had never been used. Filling the little glass tube with the milk, he held it, while the cub sucked its contents. Again he filled it. It held about one mouthful. This was going to be slow work, but at least the baby bear had stopped crying. Searching through the cupboard shelves, Ethan found a small empty bottle, rinsed it with steaming water the way people cleanse a baby's bottle, and fitted the rubber end of the pen filler over its mouth for a nipple, in which he poked a hole.

"Here, then!" He filled the bottle with the warm milk and poked the nipple into the little bear's pink mouth. The cub held the bottle with his handlike paws, shut his eyes and drank. The boy could see his tiny sides filling out. At last the little creature rolled over on his back, tucked his hind legs up close, and went to sleep. Ethan laid him in a

chair and covered him with the end of an old woolen scarf.

"Well, well," the Captain exclaimed, when he came back in the red glow of tea time. The snow had ceased to pelt, and a wind came whistling down the chimney. "What's this? What have we here?" He touched a finger to the little bear's black muzzle. It must have tickled, for the cub wrapped one furry paw around his nose, yawned widely, rolled over and began creeping, with whines, about the chair cushion as if in search of something. Ethan gave him another bottle.

"That's Snooks," Ethan named his bear.

"Poor little chap!" said the Captain, when Ethan had told how he found him. "We've saved one bear, anyway. Where had he better sleep?"

They decided to make his bed up in an empty cracker box. That evening the Captain had to make out a long report. The two huntsmen had been arrested for killing game where they had no business to. Ethan opened the blankets on his cot, slipped hastily into

his flannel pajamas and humped his way into his nest. Down, down he sank toward a pool of sleep. He was aroused by a wail from the cracker-box in the kitchen.

"That cub can't be hungry again!" thought the boy but the wail continued. Such a pathetic little cry!

"Maybe Snooks is lonesome," called the Captain.

Ethan yawned. "Well, give him here, then." His brother came with the furry mite and thrust it under the blankets. "Don't roll on him, that's all."

Then such wriggling and clawing, until the little bear had curled himself into the hollow of Ethan's neck, with just his nose out, breathing against the boy's ear.

"My!" thought Ethan, "I'm glad I wasn't afraid to go into that cave! There are not many boys my age lucky enough to have a bear for a camp mate."

CHAPTER II

Ethan's Busy Day

Ethan watched as his bear cub walked flat-footed up and down the kitchen. How chubby and funny he looked! He was no bigger than a cat. Ethan had found the baby bear in a cave after its mother had been shot. Ethan was glad to remember that the Ranger Captain had arrested the men for hunting in a national forest.

"He looks like a plush Teddy Bear," laughed the Captain, when Snooks sat down in a spot of sunshine, reached for his toes, and began rocking contentedly back and forth. Then the Captain's eyes fell on the muddy paw marks that dotted the clean-scrubbed floor. "We ought to keep him in the wood shed," he said.

"He'd be lonesome," pleaded the boy.

"All right, this is to be your week to keep

the cabin clean, and mine to cook; so do just as you please about it," said his brother.

Breakfast over, the Captain started out with the sword-like knife with which he was clearing overhanging branches from the trails. Ethan longed to follow him through the woods, but first he hurried to mop up the kitchen floor and to make the cabin as tidy as his brother always kept it. When these tasks were finished, he started down the trail with the cub at his heels.

A little brook tinkled and twinkled over the stones behind the barn; birds flashed out of the pine trees for straws with which to build their nests; and magic carpets of white clouds sailed across the sky. Winkie, the little pack donkey kicked up her heels and ran when she smelled the bear. How Ethan enjoyed the out-of-doors! Soon he and his bear cub came to the place where the Captain was clearing the trail. Ethan watched him, but he kept at a safe distance from the swinging sword.

"Come, Snooks!" called the boy, as the cub stopped to nibble the new grass.

"Whoof!" said Snooks, galloping along behind. Ethan lifted him through the gap in an old stone wall and started across the swamp.

The wet ground sloped to a fringe of brownish-green plants. Phew! It smelled like skunk-cabbages.

Snooks, at the top of the wet bank, wriggled his rubbery nose at the strange odor. Suddenly, out from under him went his fat legs. The cub gave a squeal of dismay. Down the muddy bank he coasted, with all four paws spread, as he tried to stop himself. Ethan couldn't help laughing. Suddenly Snooks came to a halt astride a big skunk-cabbage, his eyes popping with surprise, his mouth wide.

As the cabbage leaf poked into his mouth, the cub must have liked the taste, for he started eating it down. "Here, Snooks!" called Ethan.

"Whoof!" The cub rolled his little black eyes at the boy, and strove to pull himself out of the mud. But as soon as he got one hind leg free, the other went in deeper. The

end of it all was that the boy had to wade through the swamp to get him. He lifted the wriggling ball of muddy fur with hands held as far from his clean shirt as he could hold them.

"Snooks!" Ethan scolded. "Shame on you! Better not let the Captain see you that way!"

"Whoof!" the cub answered him saucily.

Once back in the cabin, Ethan left his muddy shoes on the porch. The splinters in the porch floor caught in his woolly stocking feet as he dragged the zinc wash tub in from the wood shed. He poured in a pailful of cold water. Then he warmed it from the steaming kettle on the stove. Next he got the soap. "Here, now!" he said as he grasped the cub. "In with you!" He plunged the kicking Snooks into the bath.

The cub slid through his hands, and went to the bottom, with a *"G-r-r-f-f!—Wh-r-r-f-f!"* He kicked out till he got his nose above water. Then, as if swimming were as natural as running, the fat fellow paddled across the tub and around it as fast as he

could go. The muddy water splashed into Ethan's eyes and over the clean floor, and some of it splashed on the stove with a hiss. Ethan grabbed the cub by the scruff of the neck, and began rubbing on the yellow soap, while Snooks clung to the edge of the tub and tried to climb out. Ethan scrubbed his muddy sides and then soused off the soap.

As the boy reached for an old bath towel, the cub gave one leap out of the tub and made for the Captain's bed splashing water over everything. Ethan pounced upon him and rolled him up so tight in the big towel that he held him a prisoner. Soon the warmth from the oven door dried the little rascal till his fur rose warm and fluffy.

While Snooks curled up for a nap, Ethan had to get to work with the mop and scrub pail to clean up the cabin again. "There!" he sighed at last, "I hope I never have to do that again. Snooks will have to stay in and keep clean."

He was just spreading a "heel" of his brother's freshly baked bread when he heard

a whine. The cub had climbed the screen door and had somehow got his claws caught.

"Snooks!" he scolded, "you get into more kinds of trouble than I ever heard of." He took the little bear down and then turned away to set the table and Snooks came galloping to climb his leg, whining for something to eat. Ethan gave him a tiny lump of maple sugar. "Now you stay here." The boy opened the door a crack, intending to go to meet the Captain.

With a squeal of protest, the cub darted between Ethan's feet and away towards the swamp, flat-footed. Winkie snorted and kicked her heels at him, and Ethan tried to call him back, but Snooks gave no heed. By the time Ethan had on his muddy shoes, the cub was scrambling through the gap in the old stone wall. The boy found him coasting in the mud like a boy coasts down a hill, lying on his stomach. At the bottom of the bank, the little bear stopped to bite off a leaf of a skunk-cabbage. He gobbled it down, his black eyes snapping with delight. Then

he gamboled on till he lost his balance and rolled sidewise in the mud.

"Snooks!" called Ethan, discouraged.

The cub stood up on his short hind legs to peer at the boy. He lost his footing, and this time he slid on his back. He was again completely coated with mud.

Just then the Captain came by. He laughed. "Better give him a bath."

But as Ethan thought of going through all that cleaning up again, an idea came to him. From now on, he supposed, the cub would play in the mud every chance he got.

"I'll fix a bed for him in the wood shed," he decided. "Can't have him on my clean floor."

"All right," agreed the Captain. "After this mud dries up, we'll make him take a good swim in the brook and clean himself up."

CHAPTER III

The Black Dark

Ethan sat up in bed and held his breath.

There it was again! Something just outside the moonlit window! Something that gnawed and whined. It couldn't be Snooks, the bear cub; for he was shut in the woodshed off the porch. "Perhaps," the boy thought, "it was a panther, gnawing a bone." Ethan had never told his older brother, but he was afraid at night in this black dark of the mountains, where there were no street lights. When the Captain was late getting back from his trail-making, and his bridge-building, and it was dark in the ranger cabin, the boy would sit out on the porch in the dusk, and shiver at every sound. He hadn't been afraid in the city, where he felt acquainted with all the night sounds. But here in the woods, you never could tell

what might be hiding, ready to spring out at you!

The creature just below his window kept on gnawing. At last Ethan could stand it no longer. "Captain!" he called across to the other cot. "What's that?" He could just imagine the *Thing* jumping through the window at them.

His brother took a long time to awaken. Then he came over and peeked out the window. He laughed. "Come here, young man!" he bade the boy.

Ethan peered down at the moonlit ground. Hunched in a prickly ball, a porcupine gnawed on a log.

The next morning, with the sun shining and the birds singing, Ethan was ashamed of his fear. By and by the telephone rang, and the Forest Supervisor's voice came over the wire from Gorham. "Hello, Captain, got to ask you to come in to-day, to find out about the new rules. I'm asking all the rangers to be here."

"All right, I'll be right over," replied the Captain.

He hung up the receiver and turned to Ethan. "It's a long hike," he said, "whether I go over Mt. Moriah or around by Gilead, —that is, a long one for your length of pendulums," and he swung a leg beside Ethan's. "Think you can run things here till I come back?"

"Sure thing!" The boy was proud of being left in charge.

As soon as his brother's tall form had disappeared down the trail, Ethan set about his usual tasks. He gave Winkie some hay; fed the cub what was left of the oatmeal; and brought in wood and water. By this time it was noon, and he cooked himself a good dinner. If any campers had passed, he could have given them their directions from the wall map; but none came. The woods seemed deserted. Ethan busied himself damming the little brook, to make a swimming pool for Snooks.

By and by the sun reddened the sky, and he and Snooks ate their supper. It was just after sundown, and Ethan had begun to peer uneasily at the shadows under the cots in

the other room and behind the door, when the telephone rang. It was his brother.

"Sorry, Ethan, I won't get home till late. We had to help put out a fire."

"How late?" Ethan could hardly keep the sudden tightness in his throat from making his voice tremble.

"Maybe not till midnight. It's a long way. Better go to bed early, old top! All O. K.?"

Ethan forced himself, through tight jaws, to call back, "O. K."

But when he heard his brother hang up the receiver, his heart jumped till his knees felt like doubling up. Here he was alone with the black shadows in the cabin behind him, and the black woods closing in all around! Why hadn't he told the truth about it? But then he didn't want his brother to think him a coward.

He started at a sound in the wood-shed. His scalp prickled. What if—what if it were a panther this time—or something—then came a familiar whine. It was Snooks, wanting to get out.

He must go and shut Winkie in the barn,

before it was too dark. As he turned to go, a chill of terror ran down his spine. Surely —surely—he saw something big and dark out there moving about in the shadow of the barn! Was it a bear, a big old bear that could just claw one to pieces? Of course, it might be only Winkie. But how could one be sure? Ethan managed a whistle. It *was* Winkie. She wheeled and came galloping to the barnyard fence, where the moon made it light. Ethan shut her in, and started toward the cabin.

Just then something gave the most unearthly screech. It came right from the big pine tree. Ethan didn't want to stay outside, with no telling what around. But neither did he want to go into that dark cabin and light the lamp. Something without a name might grab him around the ankles before he could light a match. What should he do?

A new sound—no, that was the porcupine gnawing the log again. But again that fearful screech from the black shadows of the pine tree! How he wished his brother would come! A wave of loneliness and terror made

him want to cry—though, of course, a fellow his age wouldn't do such a thing. Now he could dimly see a big bird as it flew out of the tree and darted along the ground. A squeak in the grass, and the bird flew back with a mouse dangling in its claws. Why, it must be the little owl that had sat there all day, asleep, on a branch.

All the same, Ethan didn't feel like going into the dark cabin till his brother came. In the silence, a board creaked. Ethan's ears twitched as he tried to listen more intently. He peered, wide eyed, into the shadowy corners of the porch. No, nothing there! But all the same, there were more queer shadows everywhere than a fellow could account for. Behind the trees! Underneath the porch! Behind the half-open door! And everything was so still! It made the noises stand out like lightning on a dark night. But he could see now that there was nothing outside to mind. Ethan braced himself and stared about him. He told himself there was nothing there after all, nothing but a little screech owl, a porcupine, and a creaking

board. And of course, he reminded himself, if there had been anything that would really harm one, his brother would not have left him alone. All the same, just since he'd gone to the barn something might have sneaked into the cabin.

By and by he began to get sleepy, and he sat down on the porch steps. The night wind was chilly for a fellow with no coat on, here in the mountains. He yawned and shivered, and yawned again. What would the Captain think, to find that he was afraid to go into the dark cabin? Why hadn't he just stayed inside, and lighted the lamps before dark? What had become of the moon? It slid in and out behind the dark patches of cloud; then disappeared. All of a sudden, a cold rain began to slant across the porch. First just a few big drops fell; then a real downpour. Ethan got up and stood huddled against the further wall, but he was getting wet just the same. What was it he had heard people say, "He didn't have the sense to come in out of the rain?" What would the Captain think when he found him there? He

mustn't give him the chance. Anything, anything was better than having his brother call him a coward!

Ethan took a deep breath, flung open the kitchen door, and stood there listening, with his heart thumping like Winkie's hoof-beats. What was that peculiar breathing? Why—himself! Now where was the lamp? If he took a step, he might go down—into what? Such nonsense!—That was just the window curtain blowing in the other room. And that was the last of his cook-fire falling apart in the stove. He knew what every sound meant. Now just wait—there was nothing in all this blackness and silence that he could not account for.

He reached a hand to the lamp shelf. There were the matches. He struck a light, fitted the chimney on carefully, and looked about the familiar kitchen. Why, everything was the same as by day. How could he have been so foolish, he asked himself. The dark was the same as the light, only you couldn't see it very well. The boy knew that never

again would he have that old dread to fight. He was glad he'd had to face it down.

He set the lamp where it would shine down the trail for his brother, and went to bed. He had dozed off when the Captain's step sounded on the porch and he heard his cheery, "Hello, there!"

"Hello," called Ethan, happily. He was so glad that he could meet his big, strong brother, unashamed.

CHAPTER IV

The Bear That Went Camping

The boys' great problem was what to do with Snooks, the bear cub, while they were away from the ranger station camping. Ethan, eleven years old, and his older brother who was in charge of the Ranger Station in the Wind-River section of the White Mountains, were starting out to build bridges. Some of the bridges would be just logs across the mountain streams, but they would help campers to find the trail. Snooks was Ethan's pal, a furry little black bear rescued by the boy, when the mother bear had been killed. But the cub was too small to leave alone, and his fat legs were too short to take him on his leash. Though he followed Ethan and his brother, the Captain, everywhere about the ranger station, he often got tired out and whined to be carried.

They were to travel light. As the Captain would have to take his axe and a saw and nails, besides a big tarp for a lean-to and their blankets and food, they were to pack it all on Winkie, the little pack-burro, who was no larger than a Shetland pony.

"Why couldn't Snooks ride Winkie?" Ethan suggested. "Right on top of the blankets?"

The Captain thought it over. "We might try it," he agreed a bit doubtfully. "The trouble is, Winkie's nose will tell her he's a bear, not a puppy, and donkeys are afraid of bears."

The morning of their start the sun shone yellow across the barn lot. They filled Winkie's pack-baskets with bacon and canned tomatoes and prepared pancake flour, with their own maple sugar among the other good things; then laid the bedding over all and roped it on. The pack made Winkie look a good deal like a western burro, if it was New Hampshire. But Winkie kicked so hard every time the little bear Snooks came near that they had to shut

the cub in the shed until the packing was done.

"Now, then," said the Captain, leading Winkie to the shed. The little donkey tripped along at his heels, pack harness jingling. They had tied on three sleigh-bells so that they could turn her loose at night to graze and still keep track of her. Winkie's long brown velvet ears swung back and forth, back and forth, contentedly in the early morning sunshine. When Ethan came along, she laid her warm muzzle against his shoulder, begging till he gave her a lump of maple sugar.

Then Ethan opened the woodshed door and brought Snooks out on his leash. At the first whiff of *bear* Winkie rolled her eyes until the whites gleamed. At the next whiff, she laid her ears back flat, and swung her heels first to the right, then to the left, then whirled about and kicked in the other direction. The little bear dodged out of reach.

"There, there now!" soothed the Captain, holding Winkie's head while Ethan tied one end of the leash to the top of the pack where

the ropes crossed. "Ethan, you stroke her nose, and give her another lump of sugar just as I put Snooks up. I'll tie him so he can't jump off."

But the minute Winkie felt the weight of the little bear added to her pack and smelled *bear* so much nearer, she snorted in alarm and went dashing down the trail, dragging her lead rope. For a few minutes the cub simply clung, flattened out along the blankets, his fat legs braced and his black nose wrinkling.

"The pack-train's going fine!" laughed the Captain.

The next instant, Ethan saw the little bear give a jump. His leash was only about three feet long, and as one end was tied to the pack, he hung, dangling in mid-air just about where the stirrup would have come. "He'll choke!" thought the boy, for Snooks' eyes were bulging and his tongue lolling out. He dashed after the pair.

But the Captain was quicker. "Winkie! Stop! Whoa, there!" he shouted. Winkie turned one ear toward the voice, then

whirled, swinging her heels in all directions in an effort to get at the bear. Luckily for Snooks, he hung just where she could not reach him.

Both boys raced after the little donkey, yelling frantic "Whoa's." Still Winkie tried to run away from the bear. Around and around the barnyard she went, then up the trail into the woods. When the boys caught up with her, she was struggling for breath, and Snooks was coughing. But he had set his teeth in the leash and so saved himself from choking, and he was soon his old self again.

As the next try, they put the cub in a basket and fastened down the lid. Snooks whined and tried to scratch his way out, but as the sun struck warm through the balsams that lined their way, he quieted. Probably asleep, guessed Ethan. Winkie had eyed the basket with suspicion, but seeing no bear about she followed the Captain with her rabbit ears rotating backward and forward, backward and forward, in her placid rhythm. Ethan brought up the rear.

The first part of their way led along the purring river. It grew narrower, and the trail led more and more steeply downhill, until the noisy stream began zigzagging among huge boulders. At last they came to a place where the trail jumped to the other side of the stream. Just there, it widened into a pool so deep that the Captain had to make a footbridge. This meant felling three logs across the pool, trimming them clean of limbs and fastening them side by side. He allowed Ethan to nail three cross-pieces in place, one at each end and one in the middle. Ethan drove the long nails in with a mallet while the Captain held the logs close together with a crowbar.

Ethan now took the little cub out of the basket and led him to a shallow place for a drink. The Captain started to lead Winkie across his bridge. The meek looking little brown burro calmly refused to set one foot on the three logs.

"She doesn't seem to think much of my bridge-making," laughed the Captain, "though it's as safe as any other kind while

it lasts. You see, burros are desert animals; they're not used to going over water." He slapped her furry neck encouragingly. "Come on, old girl!"

With one wild look at the bridge and the water that seethed beneath it, Winkie pricked her ears sharply forward, then folded them back tightly and braced all four feet as if she never meant to budge again.

"Come!" The Captain pulled on her lead rope. Winkie poked her chin out in a line with her neck and sat back on her tail, with hind legs straight along the ground and fore legs propping her up. Ethan had never seen a donkey sit down, and Winkie looked so cross, with her ears laid back, that he doubled with laughter. So did the Captain.

Ethan tried holding a lump of sugar just before her nose. Winkie craned her neck as far as she could reach but budge she would not.

"Well, I hate to do it!" The Captain said, taking a willow switch and applying it smartly to her fat rump. Winkie rolled her eyes so patiently at him that he had to

stop. "Well, old girl," he sighed, "we shall have to leave you. I've got a lot of bridges to build yet."

Then Ethan had an idea. He had Snooks on the leash. Now he took the little bear away down the trail they had come, then started back on the run. Snooks, thinking it a race, ran ahead the full length of his leash.

As the little burro smelled a bear coming after her from behind, she kicked, swung her heels about, and then ran! So determined was she to get away from that bear that she did not even notice when the Captain took her reins and led her across his bridge at top speed.

Ethan shouted with laughter. "That's the way to manage a donkey," he said.

They camped that night in the pines above a grassy meadow where Winkie would have good forage. As they hobbled her for the night, her bells tinkled through the darkness. While the Captain started down to the river with their two folding canvas water pails, Ethan spread their blankets in

the canvas tarp and started supper. Snooks foraged about clumsily for the maple sugar. What could be more fun than camping with a big brother and a little bear!

CHAPTER V

Quick Wit

Ethan swung out of the big old pine tree on the edge of the woods when his brother passed beneath it. "Hello, Captain!" he called.

"Hello, there, Ethan; look at those charred logs. That's where I found the fire those campers left burning."

"Last summer?" remembered the boy. "The men you sent to jail?"

"Yes, and if I hadn't come along just when I did—!"

"What?" the boy prompted him.

"There'd have been a forest fire. The first puff of wind would have fanned the blaze, and all those pines would be nothing but black stumps now."

"Did you throw on water?"

"Was none. I had to stamp on the embers."

"Gee!" said the boy. "I'll have to let you make all the cook-fires when we go camping."

"Young man," said the Captain, "you'll do your share of the work. I'll have to put in my time making bridges, or campers won't be able to follow the trails. And the sooner you learn to manage a fire, the better."

"All right," said Ethan. "Will we take Snooks?"

"H'm!" The Captain thought it over. The little bear was too small to leave alone at the ranger cabin. "Suppose we put him in a covered basket and pack him on Winkie, on top of our grub and blankets?"

Thus it was that the cub went on the week's camping trip with them. The trail wound through a tunnel of trees, now up a mountainside, now down. They took turns leading the little pack-mule. The cub whimpered for a while. Then he went to sleep, till they took him out of his basket.

When the sky began turning sunset red, they camped on the edge of a fir wood. Just beyond was a grassy meadow where Winkie would have good forage. The Captain hobbled her two forelegs for the night so that she could not get too far away. Ethan could hear her bell tinkling as she moved about. Then the Captain took his axe, and he and Ethan collected fir boughs for their bed. They went away back from the trail for that, and took just the boughs that lay nearest the ground so that they would not spoil the young trees.

As they came back, they could hear Snooks whimpering. The little black rascal had climbed too high on the trunk of a pine tree. "Lift him down," begged Ethan. "I can't reach him."

"No!" laughed the Captain. "He might as well learn what to do."

Snooks whined and begged, but the two brothers only set to work poking the stem ends of their fir boughs into the ground at a slant toward the head end of their bed. By the time they had a level mattress built

up two feet high, the little bear started backing down the tree, tail first.

" 'At a' boy!" said Ethan, giving him his pan of bread and milk.

"One bad thing about this camp," said the Captain, "we'll have so far to carry water." He took the two canvas water pails downhill to the river.

Ethan decided to start supper before it grew entirely dark. The cool night breeze made him hungry and sleepy. There was a big, flat stump that would do for a table. He laid out their aluminum dishes, and then looked about for an open space to start a cook-fire. Wouldn't his brother be surprised to come back and find supper under way? He scraped away the pine needles. There was no big tree overhead for the flame to catch. Standing three stones on edge, he had a fire-place large enough to hold the big frying pan level. Next he made a tepee of dry twigs, threw on a handful of dried pine needles, and lighted them. Poking in the ends of larger sticks to keep it going, he had

a good fire, he assured himself. Then he turned to slice the bacon.

A sudden flare of red light behind him, and the night was full of a crackling, popping sound that set his heart to racing in alarm. A three-foot fir seedling—the cutest baby tree!—had caught fire. Why, the little fir was several feet away! You wouldn't have thought it would catch! But it had! What's more, there were other seedling trees behind it—ever so many. If he didn't put this one out, quick, it would set all the others ablaze. It was the awfulest moment Ethan had ever known. A cold prickle ran over his scalp. His brother would have to climb clear up from the river before he could get there with the water pails. And in three minutes more, the thing might start a forest fire. It would burn up the woods that his brother had been set to guard. Whatever was going to be done about putting out that fire would have to be done by himself.

Snatching the canvas tarp from their bed, he beat at the flame with all his might.

Slap! Slap! Now he had the little seedling put out. It held up bare branches like a blackened skeleton.

But a snake of flame was running along the dried pine needles. He slapped at that. Scotched it!

His cook-fire popped and sent an ember flying out on the other side, and another flame shot along the ground. Ethan beat that out, and trampled on it. His cook-fire had become a bonfire. It shot still another live coal into the pine needles.

Ethan fought, and fought. No sooner had he beaten one racing flame into blackness than another started up, another, and another! He kept the tarp going—thump! thump! thump! Why didn't the Captain come? Thump! thump! Better whistle for him. But Ethan was entirely out of breath. He could hardly make a sound. This was like a nightmare. Would the woods catch fire after all?

T-h-u-m-p! Couldn't keep this up much longer. His knees felt wobbly, the soles of his shoes were too hot, and the smoke and

heat hurt his eyes. His throat was so dry he couldn't swallow. It almost choked him.

T-h-u-m-p! he went at one last pin-point of flame.

A sizzling sound, and a smell of wet embers, made Ethan turn. The Captain had come! He was throwing a pail of water on the smoking tree. Then he threw the other pailful over the pine needles.

"Well, old chap," Ethan felt both his blistered hands grasped between his brother's big, hard palms. "You all right? Tell you what, you had your wits about you. If you hadn't acted quick, these woods might have been ablaze by this time."

Ethan shuddered at the thought.

"Only hereafter, Ethan, pick a large, flat rock to build your fire on. I meant to tell you. And then I'll have to show you how tiny we keep a cook-fire."

Ethan's throat hurt. "I thought a fellow had to learn," he said.

"Fire's too dangerous to experiment with," said the Captain. "But, Ethan, I'm proud of you, proud of the way you fought

that fire before it got too big for us. You showed quick wit! Now, then, you just watch this time, and I'll have something good to eat in a jiffy."

CHAPTER VI

Ethan's Other Eyes

"Well, Ethan," said the Captain, "I think I'll have to climb Mount Sugarloaf to-day to get an outlook. Want to come along?"

"You bet!" Ethan wiped the frying-pan with a bunch of clean grass and hung it on its nail on the tent pole. "May I take Snooks?"

"Too far, I'm afraid, for his short legs." He looked at the tiny bear who sat licking syrupy paws in a spot of sunshine. "Better put him on his leash, and leave a pan of water for him."

The two brothers stuffed some lunch into their pockets, and eleven-year-old Ethan strode along the trail after his Ranger brother. Winkie, the little pack-mule,

brayed as they passed the meadow in which she was hobbled.

Ethan sniffed. Once they had crossed the brook on the three big stones, the way led through a perfumed patch of honey lupine. As the trail looped back toward the stream, they tramped through bracken fern, knee high. Then they had to cross a miry place where skunk cabbages crushed disagreeably beneath their feet.

The way now led upward, through fir trees that brushed their faces. The *tink! tink!* of Winkie's bell still came to them from the meadow. By and by they came out into an open space that ended in a ledge. Here an old juniper tree writhed and twisted along the ground as if it were trying to cling fast in a high wind. "Looks as if it had a hard time hanging on," laughed the Captain. Its branches were so low that Ethan could barely crawl beneath them. From the cliff they had a view of a river, far below. The roar of the foaming gorge came faintly up to them. A patch of winter snow lay in a hollow where it was shady, and

Ethan and his brother stopped long enough for a snow battle.

From there on, the mountainside was all sharp rocks. There were just "ducks" (little piles of stones) to mark the trail. Finally they had to scramble up a smooth ledge as high as a barn roof. They were on the tip-top of the mountain. —*Whoosh!* The wind blew so strong that Ethan could not stand up against it. Every time he tried to get to his feet, it blew him over, and he had to crawl on all fours.

The Captain, himself, got down on his hands and knees to take a look through his big field glasses at the country that lay below. Back the way they had come, they could see the white patch of snow where they had pelted one another, and the brown zigzag of trail that led down to the green rim of fir woods. The wall of trees stretched on as far as they could see. Far to the right, were other rocky peaks.

They ate their lunch, drinking thirstily from their canteens. "I must go down this other side," said the Captain, "and find out

if bridges need to be built across that river. But I wish, Ethan, you could go back to camp by the trail we came."

"Why," demanded Ethan, "couldn't I go with you?"

"Well, partner, I'd like to have you along, but you see—I can make quicker time alone. It takes pretty long legs to go where I'm going and home, before night. But you won't have any trouble following the trail, will you, old Scout? I'm sure Snooks will be crying for his supper."

Ethan thought of the poor cub, all alone there! He was happy, too, to think that his brother believed him capable of getting back alone. Most grown-ups never gave one a chance to try anything all by oneself. "Sure," said Ethan, "I'll go back and have supper ready when you come."

"Good!" The Captain shook his hand hard, as if to seal a bargain, and Ethan thought his brother's eyes shone with approval.

He watched while the Captain, with axe swinging from his belt, strode down the far

side of the mountain where there was no trail. After a while he was lost to sight among the trees.

Just below the peak was a mammoth square chunk of boulder with a hollow place behind it that looked like a playhouse without a roof. Ethan scrambled down to it. It was a cozy place, sun-warmed, but out of the wind. Moreover, a narrow passageway led to another little room, and another. Here was a place for all the world like a flight of stairs. There an odd plant grew, with flat purple flowers. Ethan explored the weird tumble of boulders as he went along, though he knew there was not much time to waste.

Suddenly he noticed that the sun was riding fast toward the horizon. And here he was, all alone on a windy, cold peak. He would just have to race if he wanted to get to camp by sundown. —But where was the trail? Which side of the peak was it on? Now he could hear something that hammered like hoof beats. It was his own heart pounding in his chest. "Got to start back; got to start back," he told himself. He

scrambled up the boulders, and off from them, till his shirt was damp. He trudged back and forth across the loose rocks till they gave way beneath his feet, and he fell to the ground. He lay quietly till his thoughts stopped whirling. Where had the trail ended? Why, on the top of the peak, of course! Back he scrambled. Again the wind blew him over, but he crawled on hands and knees. Hurray! There was the patch of snow! That must be the right direction. Leading straight to it, he could see the little stone "ducks" that marked the way. He followed them as fast as he could, until he came to the snow bank, and the juniper tree that clung to the cliff. This was the place they had passed; for there were the very snowballs with which he and the Captain had pelted one another. And there the trail through the woods began. But the sun was getting redder and redder. If it got dark, what then? Ethan ran till his breath gave out and his knees felt wabbly. Then he slowed down to a walk until he could run again. In the woods, the shadows of the

tree trunks lay in dark stripes between the brilliant bars of sunset light. "What if—what if there were something in those shadows that would come *whoofing* out at him!" he thought. For a minute he crouched close against a tree trunk, and his scalp prickled as he thought of meeting a bear. Again he started on the run. The path over the pine needles was soft under foot, and soundless, but the branches brushed his face; and as twilight crept upon him, he was startled to be touched like that. There wasn't time to be afraid—he must get to camp. But the shivers ran up and down his spine.

At last he could hear Winkie's bell. It sounded pretty far away, but it showed that he was still headed in the right direction. Now it was too dark to see the trail, but he could feel its hardness beneath his feet. Away off to the right, the brook tinkled faintly. But now in the woods it was pitch dark. Ethan could not see one step before him. He could only feel. What if his feet went off into the bushes? He felt around

till his foot struck hard ground again. He held both arms out before him, to ward off the branches that might strike him in the face. How good the fir trees smelled! How cool and damp the air had grown! It was as if he had eyes all over him now; he really could not see a thing, but he could feel, and smell, and hear the way he was going.

Ugh! There were those skunk cabbages! Now which way? This time the ground felt soft all about him, and Ethan had to kneel and feel about with his hands to find where the plants had been trampled down by their feet. At times he would lose the trail; but when he did, he would turn back. Three cheers! Here was the bracken fern up to his knees; and now his nose began getting the sweet smell of the patch of honey lupine. He just followed his nose till he was among the flowers. Now, to the right, the brook tinkled loud and close. He remembered they had crossed it on the stones. In the dark he plunged in above his knees, but as he scambled out on the other side, there was the smell of dew-wet grass, and Winkie's

bell tinkling in the darkness. Ethan called, and a warm velvet muzzle poked into his neck. He found a dried apricot in his pocket, and Winkie licked it off from his palm.

No bonfire blossomed red in greeting. Then the Captain had not come. But Snooks' whines told Ethan where camp lay. How glad he was that they had left an armful of dry firewood under a corner of the tarp. He started a fire on a flat boulder, a fire that lighted an island of good cheer in the blackness. First he gave Snooks a panful of crackers and milk; then he hung a pailful of water to boil. He was busy cooking when his brother's whistle sounded through the woods.

"Well, you deserve a medal," said the Captain. "I'm starved! And you found your way all right? I knew you would."

Ethan confessed how he had played so long that he had been caught by the dark. As he told how he had felt and sniffed and heard his way along, the Captain looked proudly at him. "You had other eyes than

the kind you see with," he congratulated Ethan. "But—you had no business to play so late." And Ethan saw that he looked very grave indeed.

CHAPTER VII

The Great Big Bear

"Where's Snooks?" wondered Ethan, peering all about camp. Then he saw the baby bear asleep on the sun-warmed pine needles. The fuzzy fellow was all curled up in a black ball of fur, with one paw around his nose. Winkie, the little pack-mule, was grazing down by the river. Her bell came *tink-tink* every few minutes.

The older brother stepped out of the tent with his axe and the canvas bag of mammoth nails he used to build bridges.

"Where are you going to-day, Captain?" asked the boy.

"Up Moriah Creek. And I say, partner, I've got to fell some logs for foot-bridges wherever the trail crosses. Will you and Snooks be okay if I don't get back till about supper time?"

"Sure thing!" Ethan agreed. "I've got a lot to do to fix up around camp. And—Gee!—Wish I knew where to find some blueberries."

"I'll show you," said the Captain. "Come along, quick!" Part way up Moriah Brook, they came to a stony meadow where half a dozen steers were grazing. The animals came up to stare curiously, and they looked so exactly like young bulls that Ethan dodged behind a tree.

"They're only steers, they won't hurt us." The Captain picked up a big stick and shook it at the animals. They backed away uneasily. "See?" asked the Captain. "They're more afraid of you than you are of them.—The same as wild animals are."

"Are wild animals afraid of people?" asked Ethan, for he knew a very great deal about city subways but until this spring he had never lived in the woods.

"Wild animals are most of them afraid of us in the daytime. There's just one animal you want to keep your distance from, and that's a mother bear with cubs. She'd

go for you, because she'd be afraid you'd hurt the cubs."

"What about father bears?" asked the boy.

"A father bear would run away—very likely. These little New England black bears are pretty shy of people. They're not like grizzlies. You'll be lucky if you even catch a glimpse of one while we're at camp, although I've seen their foot-prints after a rain."

Just beyond the meadow was a place where the trees had once been burned, and only blackened stumps remained. On this sunny slope the blueberry bushes were thick. "Mm!" said Ethan, pulling off a handful of the big purple fruit. "I'll bet I pick the water-pail full for supper."

"Then I'll surely be back in time. Well, so long!" The Captain swung on along the trail, while Ethan hurried back to camp, for he had several things to do before he went berrying. First he made Snooks a little round hut of fir balsam boughs. Now they had had to carry every pailful of water

from the river at the foot of the slope from the meadow or else scramble down a steep bank for it. For the brook that raced past camp was too shallow for dipping the pail. But at one place it fell about two feet. Here Ethan piled the stones until he had the water running out of a spout in the middle. It made a waterfall just big enough for filling one's pail. It was Ethan's own idea. Wouldn't his brother be surprised?

Snooks yawned, stretched first one fat hind leg and then the other, and whined for attention. "Hello, there!" called Ethan. "Want to go berrying?" He slipped the pail over one arm and Snooks' leash in the other hand, and the cub came galloping after as the boy followed the trail upstream.

When they came to the stony meadow, the steers all looked curiously at them, and one came toward them. But Ethan picked up a big stick and shook it warningly till the animals snorted and backed away. The city boy could still hardly believe that those great animals could be afraid of an eleven year

old. Now he tucked Snooks under one arm and crossed the meadow and up the sunny slope where the blueberries grew thickest.

"*Whoof!*" The little bear crinkled his rubbery nose at the smell of them, wriggled to the ground and reached for a cluster, which he crammed, leaves and all, into his mouth. His little black eyes shone.

For awhile they both ate the sun-warmed berries. Then Ethan started filling his pail, while Snooks ran sniffing here and there, now and then getting his leash wound about a bush, usually tugging free again. Then the cub gave a peculiar whimper.

"What is it?" asked Ethan, peering after his small black form.

The cub was sniffing at a muddy patch of ground. Ethan looked. —There in the soft earth was a big round footprint, as clear as could be. It was round like Snooks', but as large as a man's, only rounder. And suddenly Ethan knew!—A bear! A great big bear, at that! A prickle ran along his scalp, for it was a fresh print, made just since last night's rain.

First he glanced quickly behind him, then he looked all around in a circle to see if the bear was anywhere near. What happened next, came quickly. Up the hill slope not three stones' throws distant sat what looked like a huge black stump with nose pointed toward the sky, but it moved slightly. No question but that it was a huge bear sitting there on its haunches clawing off pawfuls of blueberries, and poking them into its gaping mouth. But it seemed to be all alone. And there were no cub footprints with the big ones. It could not be a mother bear.

But it was one thing to have the Captain say a bear would not harm you. It was quite another to meet one in a berry patch. Ethan was a courageous boy. He had proven that before now. But after all, a bear is a bear—and you never can tell what might happen.

Ethan stared after the great furry shape. The Captain had said, "They're more afraid of you than you are of them," but even if a bear would be likely to fear the Captain, would that same bear be afraid of Ethan, the boy asked himself. Of course, though,

a father bear would likely run away. Ethan shivered. This one had not run away. But then this one had perhaps not seen him—yet. And somehow, he just couldn't help his knees feeling wabbly. That is something it is pretty hard to reason about.

The bear continued clawing off the tops of the berry bushes and pushing great pawfuls into its mouth. Would it be better to go back to camp without any berries? But that might make the bear chase him, and bears can almost certainly run faster than people, he knew.

Snooks whined joyously as he snuffed around the big foot-prints. "S-sh!" whispered Ethan. But at the faint sound the cub had made, the big bear paused to point his muzzle this way and that. Then up he rose on his hind legs to peer. But apparently he did not have as good eyes as Ethan's, for he seemed not to know exactly where they were. Neither was there enough breeze to carry their scent to his nostrils. Perhaps if he and Snooks just waited quietly, the big bear would go away after awhile.

A zigzag trail, just a way through the breast-high bushes where the ground had been worn firm by the foot prints of men and animals, led downhill from the bear to where Ethan stood. The cub ran up this trail a few paces and again sniffed at the ground. Perhaps the bear had come down this way to drink at the brook. How Ethan wished at that moment that the Captain was there. What would a bear do to one, anyhow? This one had terribly long claws and teeth. But of course the steers had horns and yet they had been afraid of him. Not knowing what to do, not daring even to go after Snooks, Ethan stood still, wishing with all his might that the cub would come back.

Gee! The big bear was coming down the trail! Not as if he knew about Ethan and Snooks, but just ambling along as if he might be going to the brook for another drink. It certainly was a thirsty day. Ethan's throat was so dry it almost choked him. On the bear came, nose pointed toward the ground, as if following the trail by scent, his head swinging from side to side. Again

Snooks whined and again the big bear stopped to peer, then came on as before. At this rate he'd pass Ethan within two feet—if he did pass. The boy told himself over and over that bears were vegetarians at this time of year and there couldn't be any real danger or his brother would have warned him. But all the same, the boy's heart beat faster and faster against his ribs, and his hands doubled into tight knots. Better at least step behind that big stump.

But what about Snooks? The cub uttered a friendly whine and started racing joyously uphill. Horrors! He was making straight for that big bear! What would happen now?

He didn't have long to worry. As the fat cub galloped up, the big fellow uttered a low growl of annoyance, then, quick as thought, reached out a furry paw and gave the cub a spank.—It sent Snooks rolling over and over, squealing with surprise, downhill straight toward Ethan. Again the boy's scalp prickled like so many needles.

As the big bear sighted the boy with the

cub running whimpering to his feet, the big bear gave an amazed "WHOOF!" and turned, lumbering back up trail. He had been afraid after all! Ethan laughed. That great monster afraid of him!

Snatching up cub and berry pail, Ethan backed slowly out of the berry patch, with his eyes on the black form still headed uphill, though it had slowed to a walk. After all, he had enough berries, he told himself—or perhaps he could find more somewhere else, not so far from camp.

"Would you believe it?" he asked the Captain that evening. "Come and I'll show you the big footprints. My, that bear was scared!"

"Of course, what did I tell you?" said his brother. "Nothing like keeping your nerve. —So Snooks got spanked, did he?" He laughed, for Snooks hadn't been a bit hurt. He was even now gobbling down his share of the blueberry pudding that they had made with pancake flour.

CHAPTER VIII

The Danger Signal

Snooks, the fat cub, lay on his back in the sunshine, scratching his furry black cheek with one hind foot. He held that leg in place by wrapping both fore paws around it. Ethan and the Captain watched the furry mite as he tried to get up again. He was so nearly a round ball with legs, that at first all he could do was to roll from side to side with all fours clutching the air. At last he gave an extra flop and got to his feet.

"Well," said the Captain, "I must be off to take a look over the woods from Bald Mountain." His duties as forest ranger were, after all, the reason for their camping trip. "Want to come?"

But Ethan had a blister on his heel, and he decided to stay around camp with Snooks. It always seemed a shame to put the cub on

a leash, and leave him tied up all day alone.

The boy spent the forenoon picking fresh fir tips for their beds and hanging the blankets over the bushes to sun. Then he washed his socks and his white linen bandanna with the red border. Campers had to do these things for themselves, he had found.

As the forenoon grew hot and the breeze died down, he thought of taking a nap on the soft ground under a big pine tree that grew at the top of the steep, rocky river bank.

"Here, Snooks!" he called.

The little bear came, in his flat-footed gallop. He was so awkward that everything he did was funny. For a while he wrestled with Ethan like a puppy. Then the boy gave him a wee lump of maple sugar, and the chubby bear sat up, with legs spread wide like a child's, while he licked the sugar which he held between his fore paws. Ethan looked at the soles of Snooks' hind feet and thought how like a human baby's they were.

Finally, Ethan lay down beneath the old

pine tree; and soon he grew drowsy as he listened to the river slapping at the rocks far below. From a bird's nest overhead, a fluffy feather came drifting down. It lighted upon the cub's nose, but his breath sent it wavering away again. This interested Snooks, and he began to give chase to it. Then a sudden breeze blew the tantalizing feather toward the edge of the cliff.

"No, no, Snooks!" called Ethan as the cub raced after it. Just then Snooks caught the feather in one paw and tried to find out what it tasted like.

"Guess I'd better put you on your leash, you young rascal!" Ethan told him, fishing through his pockets for the bit of stout cord and the breast strap which served for a tether.

The next moment the cub made a grab at the floating feather and lost his balance. Over the bank he fell.

"Snooks!" cried Ethan, his heart giving a rat-tat-tat against his ribs. He ran to see what had become of him. Would he find his pet struggling in the river far below? No,

he had come to a sudden stop on the top of a round, projecting boulder, scarcely more than an arm's length below.

"Woof," grunted Snooks.

"Wait, Snooks!" called Ethan, throwing himself flat upon the ground, that he might reach the farther. But just as his fingers touched the plush of Snooks' ear, the little bear started on.

"Come back! Here, Snooks!" called the boy. But the cub scrambled down over the rocks, his little black eyes gleaming with mischief. Down the steep incline, over first one of the round boulders, then another, the fat fellow eased himself, tail end first, while the boy tried to discover some point from which he, himself, could reach the runaway. For if Snooks kept on, he would soon come to a sheer drop of twenty feet or more.

The boy let himself down as cautiously as he knew how, here clinging to a stout bush, there to the out-thrust root of a tree. With the utmost care, he reached down for one toe-hold after another. Finally, he reached a comfortable ledge. He was almost within

reach of Snooks. He called to him, but the cub gave a squeal of enjoyment and clambered farther down. The little fellow, with his four sets of claws, could cling to the rough rocks as Ethan could not, and the strong woodbine that grew along the rocky descent was enough to support the cub's weight.

Suddenly the big rock on which Ethan was resting gave way, and he began to slide toward the river. Ethan clutched madly at the shrubs and vines; and fortunately he caught hold of a young tree with a trunk no larger around than his wrist. It held. Then with his toes, he found a niche in the narrow ledge. He was shaken, bruised, and trembling, and the sound of the river racing below did not encourage him. He looked about him anxiously, and there just at his left he spied another ledge, perhaps no longer than his cot and not so wide. If he could reach that, he would be all right. Now if only he had the cub! With his right arm he clung to the little pine tree while with his left, he reached toward the little bear, and

as soon as he was within reach he grabbed him and held the squirming cub.

Snooks, finding that they were so close to the edge of the cliff, became frightened and dug his claws into Ethan's flannel shirt. They pricked, but the boy only held the warm, shaking body the tighter. The cub whimpered like a frightened puppy.

Ethan, still clinging to the pine, swung himself over to the wider ledge. He did not let go of the sturdy little tree until he was safely balanced on the ledge. He sat down with the cub between his knees. He felt a little sick at the thought of what might have happened. Holding the cub with his knees, he took out his leash and put it on him. Then he tied the other end of the cord to his own arm.

What next, he wondered? The rocks above, though they had borne Snooks, looked none too secure. They might pull loose with a boy's weight. He could not go back the way he had come, for the boulder that had slipped had left a wide place that his legs were too short to cross.

"Well," thought the boy, "I'll bet the Captain would tell a fellow to stay here, safe and sound, until someone came to relieve him."

He knew the Captain would probably be back by dusk, and he decided he would listen for his whistle, though the river roared so loud below that he was not certain that he could hear it. Snooks curled up and went to sleep, but Ethan dared not, for fear he might roll over the ledge. The minutes dragged slowly by. Suddenly distant thunder sounded from the west. Quickly the sky grew darker as the clouds swung across the sun.

Now Ethan had a new worry. If his brother didn't get back till after dark, how would he know where to look for them? Would he even be able to see them waiting on the narrow ledge above the bend of the river? It must be time, now, for the Captain to come. It would soon be dark, and it looked as if it might rain any minute. Something must be done to signal the Captain as soon

as he came along the path upon the ledge above.

The cub, awake once more and hungry, was nosing about Ethan's pockets for the lump of maple sugar that he nearly always found there. Instead, he got hold of Ethan's ball of fishline. This gave the boy an idea. Perhaps the little bear might carry a message to the Captain!

First Ethan tied his white bandanna handkerchief with its red border around the cub's neck. The Captain could see that bit of white even in the dusk, and he would know it to be Ethan's. The pickerel line he tied to the end of Snooks' leash. Then he fastened the free end to his own wrist. Now he was ready for his big experiment.

Bear cubs are famous climbers, and Snooks could climb back to the top of the cliff over rocks that would not support Ethan's weight. If the cub should lose his footing and slip, Ethan could haul him back with the leash.

"See here, Snooks," he said, showing the little bear the sugar.

Snooks wriggled the rubbery tip of his nose longingly.

"Now go after it!" Ethan urged, and with all his might he threw the sugar to the top of the cliff above him.

With a squeal of delight, Snooks went scrambling and panting over the boulders as fast as his short legs would take him, till he finally reached the level ground above. Ethan could no longer see him, but the tug of the string on his wrist told him that the cub had gone as far as the string would let him. There was nothing now for him to do but wait. He hoped the cub would not try to return to him.

Big rain drops had begun to fall, and Ethan was beginning to feel quite disconsolate when a tug on the fishline at his wrist caused his heart to beat joyfully. Then his brother's voice came in a great halloo over the edge of the cliff. Ethan hallooed in return.

Soon the cheerful and encouraging voice of the Captain called down to him, "Steady, old chap, help is coming." He lowered a

rope with a noose in it and yelled to Ethan to slip it under his arms. Then slowly, but surely, the strong arms of the Captain hauled him to the top.

Lightning ripped across the sky, thunder roared, but Ethan was fast in his brother's arms—a happy boy.

"That's once the cub made himself useful," said the Captain, with that tight tone which meant he had been awfully worried. "The minute I saw your bandanna, I knew you were using Snooks for a danger signal."

CHAPTER IX

What Happened To Snooks

"I wish we never had to go home," said Ethan. He was stretched out in the shade on the springy pine needles with the little bear.

"You'll wish you were back under the cabin roof when it rains," prophesied his brother. The Captain, in fact, was studying the gathering clouds. "And if I am not very much mistaken, it's going to rain hard before morning. Better get supper over in a hurry."

They ate. The Captain had made a blueberry pie by rolling the crust out with a stick of peeled wood. A black cloud in the west blotted out the sun, and soon big raindrops were spattering on their noses and thudding on the dish pan. A streak of lightning now and again brightened the

shadows in the woods behind them and made the white birch trees stand out like skeletons in the night.

The Captain looked about their camp. "Now, aren't you glad, partner," he asked, "that we pitched our tent on high ground? I'll never forget the time I went to bed in a water-proof sleeping bag and when I awakened next morning the bag was floating in a big pond of rain water. You see, it had rained in the night."

Ethan laughed. "What did you do then?"

"Just reached out and paddled myself to shore with my hands," said his brother.

They had made camp in the middle of an open space. "So that if a tree blows down," the Captain explained, "it can't fall on us." The river, and the brook that fed it, curved around their little hill-top, making a peninsula of it. The swampy meadow bordered the third side, and the woods extended up a hill at the back of their camp.

"Guess I'll just turn Winkie loose in the meadow," said the Captain. Ethan could

hear the bell of the little pack mule tinkling through the darkness, as his brother came back with the rope with which Winkie had been hobbled on clear nights.

Together, then, they made their tent fast, while the wind tore at the canvas and the thunder rolled. When they had brought the food under cover, they added a couple of armfuls of dry firewood for the morrow. Then Ethan snuggled into his blankets beneath the waterproof poncho with Snooks in his arms, while the Captain tied the tent flap shut.

The rain came harder. There were leaky places in the canvas right above their bed. They had a poncho over the blankets, but the drops kept hitting Ethan on the nose.

"Tough luck," said the Captain. "We can't move our bough bed. Besides, it's leaking in about sixteen places. Tell you what! How is this for an umbrella?" and he inverted the clean dish pan over Ethan's head, all but his nose, and another pan over his own. The big drops now thudded loudly on the bottom of the pan. However, the

dish pan kept the boy's head dry, and he soon fell asleep.

That night the rain came down in torrents. There was a regular cloudburst. The water ran down the mountain side into the river, filling it fuller and fuller. But the next morning when Ethan awoke there was a streak of sunlight peeking in through the tent flap. Snooks napped in a warm, furry ball at the foot of the bed. Yawning and stretching, the boy sat up and pulled on his clothes; then stepped outside.

To his amazement the tent stood on what was almost an island. The brook and the river had risen until they flooded the meadow, and the meadow had become a lake. Ethan could hear the Captain calling Winkie somewhere up the mountain side. Then came the sound of Winkie's bell. From a high cliff the Captain waved a hand and shouted, "Start breakfast, can you, partner?" He was leading the little pack mule to grass.

Ethan thought it was queer that he was always hungry here, no matter what hap-

pened. He was glad of the dry firewood in the tent. He soon had a pot of coffee steaming with the fragrance that his brother loved. There were some trout left from yesterday. He fried them to a crisp brown. When his brother, wet to the hips, returned, he grinned. "You've certainly learned to be a good cook," he told Ethan.

When they had eaten, the younger boy surveyed their island. The river whished and foamed as it swirled around the high ground on which stood the tent. The brook was as wide as a river, and the meadow-lake was no telling how deep. The Captain sighed. "My bridges will be washed out," he explained, "if I don't go the rounds and reënforce them with fresh logs." And soon away he hurried with his axe and his bag of spiky big nails.

By and by Ethan missed the cub.

"*Here,* Snooks!" he called, saving a syrupy pan-cake for the little bear.

But no Snooks whined in reply.

Ethan ran to the river bank, wondering if the cub had fallen in. The muddy water

raced along, carrying with it fallen logs and broken branches and even a drowned rabbit. But no little bear could the boy spy.

He ran around the sun-gilt lake that Winkie's meadow had become. If anything had happened to the cub, how awful he'd feel!—In places the lake seemed pretty deep. At least over a fellow's head! But away out in the middle of it, a green, grassy place stood up like an island.—Just an island no bigger than the top of a dining-room table. And on this island a drenched black cub was crawling about as if too tired to stand.

"Snooks!" called Ethan. It hadn't occurred to him that Snooks would try swimming. A smooth place on the muddy bank of their peninsula told the story. The cub had gone coasting in the mud, and had landed in deep water. Like most young animals, he had simply spread out all four legs and paddled. Now there he was, shivering in the wet grass of the wee little island.

Ethan called and called, but the cub refused to venture back into the water. He just sat there like a live Teddy-bear and

whined. Then he sneezed. "He's catching cold!" The boy felt that he ought to get him back and build a fire to dry him off. But Ethan (a city boy) had never learned to swim. The cub sneezed again.

Then Ethan had an idea. Why not make a raft and go for him? There were logs floating down the river. If only about three of them would come floating into the pond! But they didn't. They just bumped against the bank, then swung around and went churning downstream as fast as they could go.

Now the firewood in the tent contained several short lengths of log. Ethan laid them out side by side. With a stone for a hammer and half a dozen nails that the Captain had dropped, he nailed on cross-pieces. It wasn't easy, for the logs rolled and would not stay together. He hammered his fingers, too. But finally he had what would serve for a raft. It was awfully narrow. Would it bear his weight? —As he scrambled over one end, it tipped and gave him a ducking, but the water wasn't cold.

Next time he got aboard at the midpoint. At least it didn't go down. Now to navigate his craft! Sitting cross-legged like a Turk, he reached till his hands were in the water, then paddled.

It was slow work, but little by little he drew near the cub's wee island. Snooks was by this time feeling livelier. He galloped about, trying to catch a frog. "You rascal!" scolded Ethan.

"*Whoof!*" Snooks waited till his rescuer bumped the bank, then plunged off his island into the water, and away he swam, with his fat legs paddling as if he enjoyed it. First he swam around Ethan in a circle, just out of reach, then he made for camp. Scrambling up the muddy bank, he waited while Ethan paddled cautiously back to the mainland. And while he waited, he shook himself all over Ethan's spare clothing.

The boy was tempted to spank the cub, but decided to laugh instead. All this trouble for nothing!

When the Captain came back at noon, he was leading Winkie, holding a bunch of wild

onions just beyond her nose while she craned forward to get a good bite. "Well, partner," said the Captain, "aren't you about ready to pack and go home?" He looked at Ethan's wet hair. "We'll get wet fording brooks, but once at the cabin, we can dry out by the kitchen stove."

The cabin seemed like a palace to Ethan, when they got in that night, muddy and famished. It was a luxury to take a hot bath in the washtub and climb into a soft bed with clean sheets. And Snooks ran around sniffing out his favorite haunts as if he too were glad to get back.

CHAPTER X

A Trick That Saved A Life

The little bear grew fast that summer. Soon he was too big to be carried in Ethan's arms: he was even too heavy for the Captain. When he stood up on his hind legs to see how far he could reach up a tree, his claw marks went higher each week. But he still rolled over on his back to play with his toes, and he still loved to go coasting in the mud after a rain. He still went through Ethan's and the Captain's pockets in search of a lump of sugar or some other sweet that they might have saved for him.

One evening the Captain had a little time on his hands: Winkie had her hay, supper was over, and the long reports were made out and ready for the Forest Supervisor.

"Whoof?" asked Snooks, reaching a

furry black paw into the Captain's pocket and wriggling his nose at the apple he smelled there.

"If you want it, come and get it," said the Captain, starting to run.

The bear followed a few steps; then he whoofed again.

"Come and get it!" insisted the Captain, holding the apple out at arm's length. But just before the little bear could set his teeth in it the Captain ran on toward the barnyard.

Snooks ran, too. "Whoof!" he bumped into the Captain's knees, almost knocking him down.

"All right, you may have it," the Captain said as he gave him the apple. And it wasn't long before the Captain and Ethan had taught Snooks to race with them. The minute either of them started to run, it was the signal for the little bear to come galloping flat-footedly after, and they never failed to award his trick with a bite of something good to eat.

Later they taught him to "play dead."

The first time, Ethan had to turn the little bear over on his back, and close his eyes, and open his pink jaws. Then he popped a handful of blackberries into Snooks' mouth. It didn't take Snooks long to learn a trick like that. He'd lie down on his back the minute Ethan called, "Play dead!" and shut his eyes, with all four legs sticking up straight. He would even perform his tricks for campers when they came to get their bonfire permits of the Captain.

One day Snooks played a trick of his own invention. He found an empty nail keg in which he was a pretty snug fit. Perhaps it was an accident, but the little bear's black eyes twinkled so mischievously that Ethan felt sure he was just having fun in his own way. For one evening a camper was startled by seeing this keg come rolling toward him. Then out popped Snooks with as terrifying a *whoof* as he could utter.

He delighted in rolling about in that keg. When fall came and he could no longer fit into it, Ethan saw their empty apple barrel go rolling downhill one morning.

"That bear ought to be in the circus," laughed the Captain. "I'll bet he could learn to ride a tricycle—or do anything else that I've seen trained bears do."

"I'll bet he could," Ethan agreed, wishing they had a tricycle with which to test him.

"He's a natural-born clown. But, then," the Captain remembered, "he wouldn't like being shut up in a circus cage, now that he knows what it is to be free. See how glad he is just to be off of his leash."

"What are we going to do with him," Ethan fell to wondering, "when I go back to school? Do you think he'd like to go to the city with me?"

"I do not. Bears are happier in the woods. You wait!" His brother smiled mysteriously.

"Can't leave him to starve—and freeze. Poor fellow!" Ethan was puzzled, for even the Captain would seldom come this far in winter. "Come, Snooks!" he called, trying to coax his pet into the kitchen. But Snooks

gave a *whoof* for "No!" and galloped off into the woods.

"Whatever happens, I doubt if he starves," laughed the Captain. For it seemed as if Snooks could never get enough to eat. They'd feed him table scraps till his sides were perfectly round. Then he'd go off into the woods and gobble down wild onions, wild mushrooms, leaves, and berries, if he could find them, wild apples, and even all the field mice he could catch. He would pounce at them like a puppy and clap his forepaws upon them. He would chase the rabbits that came to peer round-eyed at the light from the cabin window. He enjoyed chasing them, but he never caught one, so far as they could see. The brown bunnies would go hippity-hop-hop not three jumps ahead of his nose, their ears laid flat so as not to catch the wind; but the little bear never won that kind of race. He was too fat to run very far.

"If he were anything but a bear all this eating would kill him," said the Captain. And once in a while when Snooks had really

stuffed till he was ill they had to give him paregoric. "I'll hold his mouth open," the Captain would volunteer, "and you hold the spoon." Then how Snooks would kick and claw! But the medicine always made him feel better.

"Do wild bears ever over-eat?" wondered Ethan.

"They probably don't get the chance to. At least they don't get sirupy pancakes, and bacon rinds, and everything we let him have. Bears always lay on fat, though, to keep them warm through the winter."

The oak leaves reddened; the maples turned bright gold; and up there in the mountains the nights were snappy. Once they missed the cub for several days. Then they saw him walking on his fat hind legs, carrying an armful of Winkie's hay. Ethan followed, a-tiptoe. The cub crawled under the barn. Ethan peeked, where a big stone had fallen out of the foundation wall. As soon as his eyes were used to the darkness under there, he could see Snooks.

Just a little way inside this opening lay

an old barrel on its side. This was already half full of hay and dried leaves, and Snooks was turning around and around in it, like a dog making himself a bed. And there he stayed all the next day, which was dull and raw. But the day after, when the sun came out, Snooks reappeared at the kitchen door, licking his chops at the smell of the bacon cooking on the kitchen stove.

One day Ethan was on the barn roof putting on new shingles. He was up there in sneakers, with his nails in his pockets, while Winkie, in her stall beneath, snorted indignantly at every rat-tat-tat of the hammer. The Captain had gone after a man he had seen carrying a gun without a license, and Ethan thought of that snowy day when two huntsmen had shot Snooks' mother. The little bear lay snoozing under the porch.

By and by, along came a boy with a rifle, which he was just loading. Ethan thought that perhaps he had come to get a hunting license. He was about to call down that his brother would be back soon, when suddenly the boy began to run. He had heard

a "Whoof!" from the shadows beneath the porch floor, and he didn't stop to find out what sized bear made it. He just raced.

Snooks naturally thought it was the usual game and came racing after him with a "Whoof! Whoof!" that sounded most ferocious. Then the little bear slowed down, sensing that it was not Ethan whom he was following. Ethan, who had slid off from the barn roof, was about to burst into loud laughter when he saw the boy mount the pasture fence and turn to level his gun at the bear.

"Stop!" Ethan yelled, but the boy paid no heed. He was for the moment in what he considered a safe spot, but he was taking aim at the cub, who now rose on his hind legs to peer and sniff at the stranger.

"He won't hurt you!" Ethan wanted to shout to the boy, but as his thoughts whizzed around, he knew the other boy was too frightened to believe it. Quick! —What could he do? Ethan felt as if someone had wound him up too tight. What if the new boy pulled the trigger? What if he killed

Snooks? Then like a flash of lightning an idea came to Ethan. It was the little bear to whom he must shout!

"Snooks, play dead! *Play dead!*" he commanded with all the force he could throw into his call. That feint would at least get the bear out of the way of the shot.

Snooks obeyed. At Ethan's familiar command he dropped instantly to his back, with all four paws waving helplessly in the air, his eyes closed, but his month expectantly open.

As the boy on the fence had not yet pulled the trigger, he stared unbelievingly, first at the bear, then at his gun, and finally at Ethan, sliding down the barn roof.

Ethan was still shouting, "Play dead!" with a lumpy feeling in his throat at thought of what might have happened.

"My word!" said the new boy, as Ethan dropped a lump of sugar into Snooks' mouth and the little bear promptly sat up and licked his chops. "Is he tame?"

"Lay that gun somewhere," said Ethan, "and I'll show you."

First, he had Snooks roll downhill in a barrel, and then balance on it and roll it along, trotting like a horse on a tread-mill. Then they raced, and Snooks won. The new boy held his sides and doubled up with laughter. And before the afternoon was over Ethan had told how he had found the wee bear in the cave and raised him on a bottle. He described to him how he tried to keep him clean, when Snooks coasted in the mud, and how they had met a big bear in the berry patch, and Snooks had been spanked downhill. He even related the story of how the little bear had learned to swim, and how he and Ethan had rescued each other on the cliff. "But the trouble is," worried Ethan, "what is going to become of him when we go back to town?"

"What will you take for him?" asked the big boy, just as the Captain came back.

"We wouldn't take a million dollars!" vowed Ethan.

"I could sell him to a circus, or a zoo!"

"Not much!" vowed the Captain. "Snooks loves the woods too well for that."

"Well, say—" the boy remarked to the Captain, "guess I don't want any hunting license after all." He said goodbye and hurried down the trail.

The cold weather settled down on the mountains, and Snooks again retreated to his barrel under the barn. They had one more mild, sunny day when the young bear came out and played sleepily with his toes. But he wouldn't eat anything but leaves and that night he stuffed another double armful of Winkie's hay into the hole in the wall under the barn. Ethan, listening just outside with the Captain, could faintly hear Snooks' deep, slow breathing. It was his answer to Ethan's problem.

"He's gone to bed for the winter," the Captain whispered.

"Funny I forgot about his hibernating," said Ethan. "He'll sleep till we get back next spring, won't he? Listen to that!" as the little bear breathed more and more deeply. "Doesn't he sound snug and lazy?"

"And just think," mused Ethan, "when

Snooks first came, we had to feed him on the bottle."

"And just think," the Captain teased, "when *you* first came, you were a city tenderfoot, afraid of the dark, and nearly set our camp on fire."

"Huh!" retorted Ethan. "I put the fire out, didn't I?"

"You did." His brother gave the boy a comradely clap on the shoulder. "And now you're a regular fellow. You'll be a big help to me, another year."

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